

It's Your Move

HOW TO PLAY
THE GAME AND WIN THE MAN
YOU WANT



NICK SAVOY

MASTER PICKUP ARTIST

TEST YOUR DATING IQ

Where's the best place to meet guys?

(Hint: It's where *both of you* want to be.)

How much skin should I show for a night on the town?

(Hint: Probably not as much as you've been led to believe.)

How can I tell if a man is interested in me?

(Hint: Nine times out of ten, there's an easy way to be sure.)

Why should I always get a man's phone number when he asks for mine?

(Hint: It's *not* so you can text him the next day.)

How can I be sure he's the perfect match for me?

(Hint: You need to screen out the bad ones. The sooner, the better.)

Should I date more than one guy at a time?

(Hint: Are you serious about finding a long-term relationship? If so, yes!)

How important is sex?

(Hint: Not as much as you'd think.)

So I've met my Prince Charming and we're madly in love. Now what?

(Hint: Don't drop the ball—the game's just beginning!)

To learn the answers to these questions—and use an insider's knowledge to land the man of your dreams—your next move is to just start reading.

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NICK SAVOY



GRAND CENTRAL
PUBLISHING

NEW YORK BOSTON

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Grand Central Publishing
Hachette Book Group
237 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10017

HachetteBookGroup.com

Printed in the United States of America

RRD-C

First Edition: February 2013

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Savoy, Nick.

It's your move : how to play the game and win the man you want / Nick Savoy.—1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-60941-398-9 (trade pbk.)

1. Man-woman relationships. 2. Men—Psychology. 3. Mate selection. I. Title.

HQ801.S43387 2013

306.82—dc23

2012021760

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Acknowledgments

Long, drawn-out acknowledgments are boring and self-indulgent, so we'll make this quick. Thank you to my fellow Love Systems instructors—together we have changed many thousands of lives for the better and done all the hard work that allowed me to write this book. Thank you to Arrin and Sebastian. You mean more to me than you know. Thank you to research assistants Jonathan Lin, Katherine Bierig, James Lovley, Edward Mousenkis, and Kyle DuPrey—your contribution made the book so much better than it could have been without you.

You don't know any of these people, so let's get started with the book.

Introduction

This book is not filled with your typical dating advice for women.

For one thing, I am a professional dating coach—what some call a pickup artist. According to those who make lists of such things, I'm one of the best in the world. Quite a few people tried to stop me from writing this book, because they feared that I'd be giving away too many secrets.

This reaction surprised me at first, but it shouldn't have. Sometimes it feels like the dating world has become an arms race. I see more and more dating advice books and articles carrying titles like, "How to Control Your Woman," or "How to Get Any Man to Do Anything You Want," as if relationships were some sort of competition between men and women. In fact, the opposite should be true. One of the things I like most about my job as a Love Systems dating coach is that I make men *and* women happier. For every man whom I help find love, there's presumably a woman out there who has found love with him. Sure, there's competition in the dating world, but it's competition *within* your gender (for straight people, anyway); it's not a battle of the sexes.

While I hope that this book helps correct some of these attitudes, I actually wrote it for three different reasons:

First, in helping tens of thousands of (mostly male) clients

improve their dating lives, I've learned a lot about what makes men tick: what they respond to and what they don't. Being a dating coach puts me in a uniquely privileged position both to hear men speak extremely frankly about their love life and desires, and to see what decisions they actually make when flirting with or dating women. One of the themes of this book is that what people say they want is often *not* what they actually respond to, so my access to both my clients' thoughts and actions is invaluable.

The second reason stems from the same body of knowledge as the first. I expected that a career spent helping men succeed with women might make me an expert on some aspects of female psychology. What I didn't expect is that along the way I would have to become just as much of an expert on men. Every client has his own story—what he likes in a woman, what he doesn't, why some women will always have a place in his heart and some never will, and so on. This data doesn't come from glib surveys or clueless writers polling their friends to give a facile “male perspective” in women's magazines. It comes from hours-long discussions with men who were paying me thousands of dollars to help them improve their dating and sex lives. These men tell me things they've never told *anyone* before—even friends, family, or romantic partners. What I've learned from these conversations and observations adds up to some pretty surprising conclusions, many of which contradict conventional wisdom. I think if more women were aware of this information, they would understand men better and ultimately have happier relationships.

The final reason I wrote this book is that most published dating advice for women is inadequate. It's long on encouragement (and, for some reason, on exclamation points), but short on specifics and examples. Be confident! Make him miss you when you're apart! Give him great sex! Give me a break...

I was warned by many people—men and women alike—that I wouldn't be able to write this book in the same way I write for men. The Love Systems approach is not only to explain *what* someone should do in a specific situation, but also *how* they should do it—complete with examples and exceptions—as well as *why*. This style is much better for learning and for helping people retain, understand, and actually use the information that's being provided. I was surprised to hear that this method wouldn't resonate with women, who are used to a steady diet of empty platitudes. To me, the idea that women can't or won't understand a logical, evidence-based approach is shockingly sexist for the twenty-first century. So, while this book probably won't read as breezily as your average women's magazine, it will hopefully make a more lasting impression on your life.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

It's Your Move puts you in charge. You can read it straight through from beginning to end—which I recommend doing at least once—or you can dive in and out of the chapters that are most relevant to you right now. Part I is mostly, but not exclusively, descriptive. It explains some key principles of how dating and attraction really work, which Part II then turns into actionable advice.

Part II looks at each phase in the relationship process in order. Chapter 5 starts before you leave the house; chapters 6 and 7 are about meeting men (total strangers vs. men connected to your friends, school/work, or other activities); chapter 8 helps you attract these men to you; chapter 9 shows how to screen these men and set expectations; chapter 10 covers dates; and chapter 11 focuses on relationships. This structure lets you review the chapters in any order and quickly

get to the information you need, so you're not distracted with relationship problem solving when you're looking for last-minute pointers before a big date, and you're not forced to wade through tips about how to get more men to approach you when what you really need is some techniques to screen the men who are already pursuing you so you can find the one who is compatible.

You may not agree with everything you read here. From ten years' experience in the dating trenches, I've seen enough and learned enough to confidently tell you that unless you are a rare

Much of what you've been told about how dating and attraction works—by society, by the media, by your friends, even by yourself—is probably wrong.

exception, much of what you've been told about how dating and attraction works—by society, by the media, by your friends, even by yourself—is probably wrong. My advice is to try the techniques in this book with an open mind. If dating questions always had nice, simple answers that fit with

how people expect the dating world to be, then getting the love life you want would be easy and there would be no need for this book (or a lot of others out there). These techniques have already helped many women who have come to Love Systems for help, and will help many, many more.

Ready to get started? It's your move...

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Part I

Chapter One

What's a Love System?

They come from miles—sometimes thousands of miles—away. They enter a hotel conference room unsure and nervous about what is going to happen for the next three days. They hope that their life is about to change for the better. They have come to find the answers to their dreams.

At a Love Systems bootcamp.

There's an excellent chance that you never knew these bootcamps existed before you opened this book. You probably had no idea that on every weekend of the year, groups of men come together to learn *your* secrets from professional pick-up artists and dating coaches. Or that these men regularly spend thousands of dollars for three days and two nights of expert training on the art and science of meeting and attracting women—with a success rate of over 99 percent.

If you're not shocked yet, don't worry; it gets better. A large portion of each bootcamp is taught "live"—at bars, nightclubs, coffee shops, malls, and anywhere else where attractive women can be found. Instructors approach and pick up women to demonstrate how the system works. Clients watch and learn, and then they're the ones approaching and picking up while instructors observe and coach them.

In other words, those guys who hit on you at the bar last night or who flirted with you at the mall last weekend—those might have been chance encounters. Or maybe these men were practicing Love Systems on you, while others watched and prepared to critique their every move. Now you know. Don't you feel better?

Actually, you probably should. I'm not telling you any of this to make you paranoid. In fact, the reason why I'm letting you know about it is also one of the major reasons I decided to write this book. There is so much misinformation about how dating and attraction really works. As I'll explain in the next few chapters, what people *think* they want and what they *think* they respond to in a romantic and/or sexual context is not always what they *actually* want and respond to. You'll probably be shocked by some of what we tell men to do to succeed with women—not because I'm deliberately trying to shock you, but because a lot of what actually works can be quite counterintuitive. You won't find the stuff we teach in most men's magazines or mainstream books. But it is effective.

We didn't deliberately set out to challenge conventional wisdom—it's just where reality led us. Love Systems was developed through trial and error on a massive scale. We had no preconceived ideas. We're not troubled by what "should" work or what would be "nice" or really anything other than what actually helps average guys to attract the women who interest them. I want to share some of these techniques with you, because I think if we can unravel how and why attraction works—without flinching and without political correctness—both men and women can make better decisions about how they approach dating and relationships. And I think that will improve everyone's dating life.

GOING INSIDE

Bootcamps are three days long, usually Friday through Sunday. All three days begin in a hotel conference room with instructors teaching the Love Systems approach. During this seminar time, we run a lot of drills, like “Approaching and Transitioning,” “Teasing and Bantering,” and “Body Language.” These interactive exercises—which are all more or less what they sound like—allow clients to practice their skills and make corrections in a low-pressure classroom-type situation. But we need to get clients up to speed quickly, because they’ll be going out with us on both Friday and Saturday night for several hours of live infield training. This is the part of our bootcamp during which—if you happen to be at one of our infield locations—you might be approached by Love Systems clients and/or instructors, who will flirt with you and try to pick you up in order to practice or demonstrate Love Systems techniques.

These programs are held every weekend, in multiple cities around the world. They all follow the same structure, with slight variations. (For example, Day Game programs do their infield training at malls, coffee shops, and pedestrian areas.) A typical program has between six and twelve clients, a set of instructors—at least one for every three clients—and usually some instructors-in-training.

Now let’s break it down . . .

Seminar

We usually start bootcamps by asking clients what they’re looking for out of their dating life. As we’ll cover in more

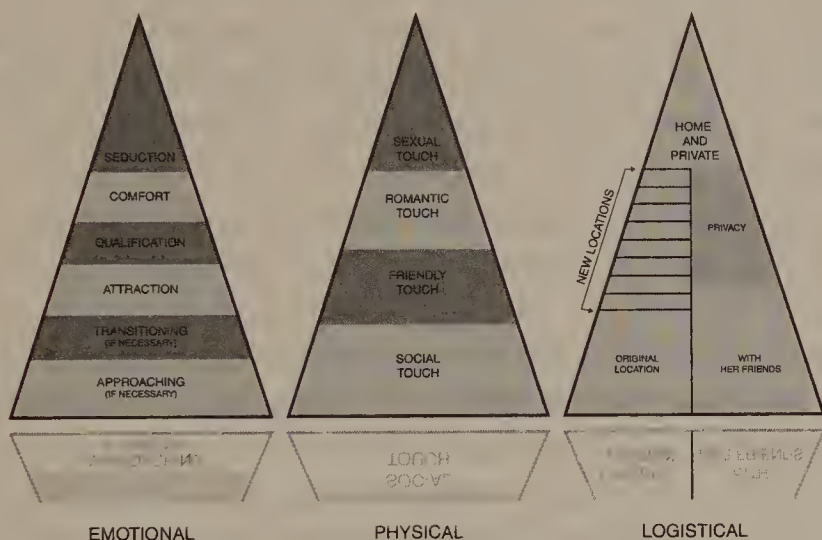
detail later in this chapter, most men express one of three broad goals. Some have never had much luck with women, so they're looking for that initial breakthrough. Others are looking for more options and better options. And others still want to improve their sex life and be able to go out any night and take a beautiful woman home. On a typical program, there may be one or two clients from the first and/or last group, with the majority usually made up of the "more options and better options" set. These initial conversations let us personalize the training program.

Once we've established goals, we introduce the overall Love Systems framework, called the Love Systems Triad. The Triad is based on what works with women in the real world—not what works in movies, TV, or romance novels. Not what would work if the world was a nicer, fairer place and everyone gave everyone else a chance. Not what well-meaning people say *should* work. We teach what our observations of over 100,000 approaches, pickups, and attempted pickups (more on this later) have shown gives a man the best chances of success.

It's called the Triad because it is set up according to the three fundamental building blocks of dating or pickup success: Emotional Connection, Physical Connection, and Logistics.¹ Each of these can be further divided into subcomponents, sub-subcomponents, and so on (see figure on page 7). The Triad is a powerful teaching tool because it is flexible: it can be used at a very simple level to get a man started with Love Systems,

1. "Logistics" refers to the social and physical context of an interaction. For example, a man meeting you when you're with your judgmental and jealous best friend who's expecting you to drive her home in a few minutes would experience bad logistics. A date usually provides good logistics, because it's the two of you alone, with plenty of time and the freedom to go anywhere. Logistics has a lot of powerful implications that we'll talk about later in this book.

THE LOVE SYSTEMS TRIAD



The Love Systems Triad provides a road map for a man to meet, attract, and begin a romantic and/or sexual relationship with a woman. It has three dimensions—emotional, physical, and logistical—each of which includes several component phases (e.g., “Attraction” in the emotional model, “Social Touch” in the physical) that should be pursued in order. Much of the teaching at bootcamps is focused on giving clients the tools to pass successfully through each phase of the model.

or it can be used at a very detailed and advanced level to troubleshoot issues for even very successful men. You can read a quick overview of the whole system at www.LoveSystems.com/Triad.

Infield

Infield training is what makes Love Systems different from just about everything that came before. Not only do clients learn the system, but they also practice it live under the eyes of expert trainers and instructors. They watch and listen as

instructors demonstrate, also live, how to use individual techniques. The infield component holds Love Systems accountable, since a client who doesn't make significant progress during his bootcamp is likely to take us up on our full money-back guarantee. We put our name and our reputation on the line every night of every program.

Infield sessions usually start around 10 p.m., when we all meet up in an area of town where there are a lot of bars and nightclubs. There is nothing special about bars and clubs in the Love Systems methodology; we use them on bootcamps because they provide large and anonymous environments in which groups of men can practice Love Systems without running into the same women over and over. The training is equally applicable to any environment in which men and women can meet each other. As noted above, Day Game programs take place in malls, pedestrian districts, parks, and coffee shops, while one-on-one training can happen anywhere.

For the next few hours, both instructors and clients will approach women using the techniques taught at the seminar that day. Women don't tend to go to bars and clubs alone, so this usually means approaching you and whatever friends are with you. If you are out with male friends, no problem—we'll still approach you. If you've made yourself utterly unapproachable—surrounding yourself with aggressive-looking guys in the corner, for example—then it's even *more* likely we'll approach you, because clients will want to see instructors demonstrate such difficult pickups.

Many clients have what we call approach anxiety, or a fear of approaching a woman whom he doesn't know or have any reason to know. This is an instinctive, almost primal feeling that we'll talk about more in chapter 6; for now, it's enough

to know that approach anxiety has nothing to do with confidence and success, or lack thereof, in other areas of life. We had a highly trained paratrooper by the name of Edward at one of our programs a couple of years ago who told us that he actually felt more nervous about approaching a group of beautiful women in the corner of a bar with everyone looking on than he ever did jumping out of an airplane. This is a man who has seen combat—not someone who normally lets fear rule his life.

While approach anxiety can seem like it's an insurmountable obstacle to many men, an experienced instructor can get even the shyest client confidently approaching women within an hour or two. Then the fun begins. Instructors watch clients approaching attractive women and give coaching and feedback: sometimes from a distance and sometimes up close to hear everything being said. An instructor might join the conversation, usually by introducing himself as a friend of the client. He might even take quick cell phone video clips so we can illustrate a specific point to the client later—usually a body language issue. But don't expect to catch us doing any of this next time you're out. We've mastered the skill of remaining inconspicuous while we work—and that's the only secret I *won't* be sharing in this book...

When instructors do approaches, another instructor is often nearby with a group of clients, just out of the woman's earshot. This positioning allows him to do a play-by-play of everything that is going on and explain what the instructor is doing at every key moment and why. Such training is invaluable for most of our clients, who have never had successful pickups broken down in this way.

Did I say successful? Most are, ending with a phone

number, kiss, or more. Some aren't. Sometimes, a woman just isn't going to be interested in a man, no matter how skilled he is. That's part of the realistic expectations we share with our clients. But over the course of the night, most such instructor demonstration approaches, or "demos," will be successful and there will be plenty for clients to observe and model. By the end of the first night, many clients will be having successful outcomes as well.

We'll usually try to limit approaches to half an hour or so, since we have a lot to teach and there's only so much time. But clients often have a will of their own, and it's happened more than once that one of our trainees decided to hang out with his new love interest instead of finishing the night in the program. Some clients have even married women whom they first met on a Love Systems bootcamp.

By the second night of infield training, you can really see the transformation. Clients' approaches tend to be crisper, more confident, and more polished from having already had over ten hours of seminar and five hours of live training under their belts. They've gained a better understanding of what women find compelling, and they've learned how to project aspects of their own character and personality that are most attractive. Usually they will end the second night with phone numbers, dates, and/or someone they've made a great connection with.

So . . . what do you think of all this? If you're like most women, your reaction is probably some combination of "That's fascinating and fun," "That's offensive and obscene," and/or "Are you serious that men take *classes* to become more attractive to women?" Whatever your opinion, it's undeniable that Love Systems works; the method has been tested, proven, and

documented more times than I can count.² What we're telling men about women is accurate, and these secrets about attraction and dating have powerful ramifications. You deserve to know—starting with the very next chapter—what these secrets are, so you can use them to *your* advantage to get the love and the relationships that you want.

But before we dive into the specifics, I want to look at five common misconceptions about men, dating, and bootcamps. It would be easy to make assumptions about what kind of clients attend these programs, or how they are taught to see and treat women—especially since some of the more common assumptions are reinforced by the media as well as unsuccessful Love Systems imitators. The point isn't to defend these bootcamps—some aspects of how we teach them *do* bother a lot of people, and I won't shy away from those—but rather to let you know exactly how we know what we do so you can put our conclusions in context.

MISCONCEPTION #1: BOOTCAMPS ARE ALL ABOUT CASUAL SEX, NOT MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Men come to Love Systems to improve their success with women. Some say they want more sex. Others talk about wanting a long-term relationship or marriage. In reality, most single men are open to either possibility and to various points in between. Even the most jaded player can meet his perfect match, and even the most hopeless romantic can enjoy a night of passion without things going further. It depends on how

2. See www.LoveSystems.com/media.

he's feeling, the woman he's talking to, and the overall situation. My guess is that many of your single male friends think this way, too. And, for that matter, most of your single girlfriends as well.

On the other hand, where there's smoke, there's usually fire—or at least something that explains where all that smoke came from. We *do* teach men who want to improve their sex life how to be more sexually desirable. We show them how to be more seductive, and we share with them our best strategies on how to get you wanting to go to bed with them. As long as a man is honest about his intentions with the women he meets, it's fine by us.

We also share with our clients that whatever a man's long-term intentions with a woman are, he should usually try to sexualize his relationship with her—even if he is totally focused on long-term romance and marriage. A man has a better chance of becoming your boyfriend (if that's what he wants and if he knows what he's doing) as your regular hook-up partner than as the nice guy who takes you to fancy dinners and is “dating and waiting.”

By the way, there's nothing about being seductive that has to mean being dishonest, sleazy, or manipulative. We all know that sex is a normal and healthy part of human relationships as well as of our physical and mental well-being, and that there are a lot of men and women who are unhappy with their sex life. But somehow, the dominant media narrative is that it's weird or sordid for these people to actually want to fix what's lacking in their lives; I suppose that they're supposed to just accept their fate. These puritanical echoes are hypocritical to be sure, but anyone who challenges this point of view is asking to be cast in devil horns and a pitchfork.

A TV interview I once did provides a great example of this

dynamic. After a long setup, the interviewer proudly pulled out his best “gotcha” question. He had evidence that our seminars included expert techniques to get “same-night lays.” Everyone hushed. The cameras moved in for a close-up. The interviewer smirked. When I happily confirmed that, yes, this is one of the things we teach men how to do, it was like I’d admitted to drowning puppies. The interviewer stared at me in disbelief, and we settled in for a long, awkward silence. I wasn’t going to apologize for it, and he wasn’t going to explain why it was wrong. It was just one of these things that you can’t say on the news.

MISCONCEPTION #2: BOOTCAMPs TEACH MEN TO LIE AND TRICK WOMEN INTO BED

There isn’t even a grain of truth to this one. We don’t teach men to lie; in fact, we teach them not to, though not strictly for moral reasons. While I personally believe in honesty, clients come to me for practical skills, not ethics lectures. The simple fact is that being honest works much better for most men than being deceptive.³

It’s hard to pretend to be someone or something you’re not. Flip through a few TV channels and you’ll see as many unconvincing acting jobs as successful ones. These actors are usually trained professionals, who are often cast for their role based on their perceived ability to believably portray the character in question. They have the benefit of a script that everyone is

3. I’m using the phrase “being honest” here to mean the absence of lies or deliberate deception. I’m not implying that a man should go out of his way to tell you about his less attractive qualities when you first meet. Everyone tries—or at least should try—to put their best foot forward and to present the best possible version of themselves when meeting potential romantic partners.

going to follow and that was written to reinforce their characterization. They probably benefited from frequent rehearsals and retakes. And *still*, so many actors fail to be believable. If professionals can't count on being convincing with all of these advantages at their disposal, then most men shouldn't have much luck trying to act their way into your bed.

Obviously, some men *do* successfully use lies and manipulation to get women to have sex with them. But these guys (usually well practiced and psychopathic) are not generally found at a Love Systems bootcamp. The women they seduce tend to be more naïve and socially inexperienced. These women may be wonderful people, but Love Systems clients want to be able to succeed with the women they truly desire, not just the ones who are easy to seduce.

Contrast lies and manipulation with the type of "inner game" that we teach men—straightforward confidence (but not arrogance), comfort in one's own skin, and passion for life and its possibilities. These qualities are more attractive to most women than even the most exciting tall tales. However, this attitude is impossible for most men to pull off if they're building on top of a foundation of compartmentalized emotions, dishonesty, and deception. Moreover, most Love Systems clients (we'll talk about them in a moment) *do* have interesting lives. They don't need to invent anything; what they need to do is to present themselves in a way that women find compelling.

In other words, Love Systems is not about pretending to be someone you're not. It's also not about doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result, as implied by the well-meaning but useless advice to "be yourself." Rather, Love Systems teaches men to be their *best* selves. Love Systems clients learn and use what Tyra Banks called "the secret and unwritten rules" of attraction after we taught them on her

show. Some men naturally internalize these rules—expressed through their instincts, habits, and behaviors—and some learn from older friends and relatives. For those who didn't or don't, there's Love Systems.

MISCONCEPTION #3: LOVE SYSTEMS GIVES MEN AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

An advantage, yes. But unfair? Admittedly, Love Systems is powerful—exponentially more so than anything else that's ever been available to men. The methods are based on years of testing and experimentation on a tremendous scale, including over 100,000 approaches and pickups or attempted pickups involving men and women of every age, background, appearance, taste, lifestyle, and geography.

This isn't Bob telling Joe what worked for him at the bar last night. This isn't another trumped-up study on the science of attraction based on a small and unrepresentative sample of twenty-two college students somewhere. When a Love Systems instructor comes up with a concept or technique, we're all going to try it. These guys range from five foot two to six foot five, from their twenties to their fifties, from ugly to reasonably attractive, from introverted to extroverted, and they cover every major racial group. Their lifestyles and tastes and preferences in women vary equally widely, and they have taught in over fifty different cities on every inhabited continent. When such a diverse group acts as a testing lab, it's very easy to determine if a given technique is universally applicable, or if it only works for certain types of men or with certain types of women or in certain specific situations. Understanding how a technique can be applied is crucial; far more men read our books or watch our videos than are able to come to train with us live,

so we need to be clear about when certain techniques should and shouldn't be used.

Although no one has ever put this much real-world dating experience together before, it doesn't mean there is anything *unfair* about it. It's important to remember that we're talking about adult women in social situations like parties, bars, and coffee shops. You might find someone trained by Love Systems to be interesting and attractive and engaging to talk to and flirt with, but you won't find yourself losing your free will. You've been attracted to men before and know that it's up to you whether you want to act on that attraction. All we're doing is helping men make the most of what they have, which has the result of effectively increasing the supply of desirable, interesting men out there for you.

Which leads me to my next point: presumably, you want men to find you attractive and to try to make themselves attractive to you. Everyone tries, or should try, to make the most of what they have. I thought Dr. Phil put it well when he had us on his show; when one audience member criticized Love Systems, he asked her to explain why men learning conversation or flirting skills was more deceptive than a woman wearing a pushup bra or makeup. She couldn't.

Also worth considering is that women share advice about dating and relationships far more than men do. Think about what you read the last time you picked up a women's magazine. Think about what you're reading right now. Think about what you talked about the last time you were out with your girlfriends. As we'll see in chapter 3, a lot of the advice you may get from your girlfriends will be wrong, but at least most of them are *trying* to help. At best, a man can expect jokes and gentle mockery if he talks to his male friends about his love

life in any kind of depth, and in any case, such friends are likely as clueless as he.

In fact, before I started with Love Systems, I was someone who could have really used some help with my dating life, but I kept coming up empty. I read and tried everything I could. The final straw for me came when I went to my city's biggest bookstore, found the self-help section, and picked up the featured book of dating advice for men. The author was described as being in his fifties, single, and living with his dog. His writing credits consisted exclusively of books about computer programming. This wasn't necessarily the author biography I had in mind when I went to the bookstore, but wisdom often comes from unlikely places, and I was desperate enough to give Mr. Programmer a chance.

I opened the book to a random page. It was headed "Nightclubs" and consisted of a single paragraph, which told readers to avoid nightclubs altogether because many men go there and the competition can be hard. Gee, thanks. Another random page was part of a chapter about restaurants. Here the author told me to go to restaurants alone and approach women at their table saying: "A beautiful woman like you should have a beautiful evening. Do you mind if I join you?" If being interrupted in the middle of dinner with your friends by a strange man with a cheesy line wanting to join your table would *ever* work with you, then put this book down. We obviously live on two different planets.

Given what used to pass for dating advice for men, Love Systems can hardly be said to provide an unfair advantage; at most, it redresses the balance. But "advantages" and "balance" don't provide a good lens with which to look at dating and relationships because we're not talking about a battle of

the sexes here. If more men could be charming and interesting instead of harassing you with awkward lines when you're trying to eat your dinner, *everyone* would be better off.

Moreover, Love Systems is effective only to the extent that women actually respond to what we teach—otherwise, our approach wouldn't work and we'd get refund requests instead of referrals. Blaming Love Systems for supposedly giving men an unfair advantage is like blaming a restaurant for serving delicious meals. It's a compliment, not a criticism.

MISCONCEPTION #4: MEN WHO LEARN LOVE SYSTEMS ARE LOSERS YOU'D NEVER WANT TO DATE ANYWAY

A small number of our clients *could* probably be described as stereotypical losers. They have low social skills, many fears and limiting beliefs, and a history of rejection and failure. What these men have in common is that they are human beings who are lonely and sad. What sets them apart from their peers is that they refused to give up on themselves and refused to give up on the chance to be happy in life. Instead, they put their remaining ego and self-confidence on the line to get the help they need. I was one of these men once, and I'm proud to teach them now.

I'm even more proud when these men come out of their shells, get over their hurt, and take their first steps into a world where they have happiness, excitement, companionship, and something or someone to look forward to each day. And I'm most proud when I hear from them months or years down the road, when they're so excited to tell me about their dates and girlfriends and wives—women they're thrilled to be with, and

who are in turn equally thrilled to be with them. Just last week as I was finishing this book, I was invited to my former client Jesse's wedding. When I first met him on a bootcamp, he was twenty-four and had never had a second date or a girlfriend.

That said, 95 percent of our clients don't fit the loser stereotype. Many (female) journalists have commented on this fact after sitting in on Love Systems programs:

Although I was prepared to be grossed out by mouth-breathing nerds, most of the boot-camp attendees were relatively good-looking and seemingly socially adjusted."⁴ (Emily McCombs, *Asylum*)

The guys who attended the winter seminar in Boston were unsettlingly normal, men you probably know or work with. Most were thirty-somethings in business jobs. They weren't ugly. They seemed nice enough.⁵ (Meredith Goldstein, *Boston Globe*)

In fact, it's not just "unsettlingly normal" men who can improve their dating life and relationships with women. Doctors, lawyers, athletes, and even the occasional celebrity have all been through Love Systems training—there's even a TV episode where the popular hip hop band the Streets trains with a Love Systems instructor. The members of the band had no trouble connecting with women after their shows, but they

4. Emily McCombs, "8 Woman-Approved Tips from Pick-Up Boot Camp," *Asylum*, July 8, 2009, www.asylum.com/2009/07/08/pickup-tips-from-pickup-boot-camp.

5. Meredith Goldstein, "Learning Their Lines," *Boston Globe*, April 15, 2009, www.boston.com/lifestyle/relationships/articles/2009/04/15/learning_their_lines. This article is also available at www.lovesystems.com/in-the-media/learning-their-lines.

weren't as used to meeting and attracting women in the daytime before they learned Love Systems.

Does it surprise you that such men come to Love Systems? Many women don't know how confusing and difficult the dating ritual can be for men. It's even challenging for those men, like many of our clients, who appear to have everything going for them: a good job, a good education, a stable lifestyle, and so on. I'll save you the trouble of asking the question you're probably thinking of, since it's the same question they get asked almost every time they start talking with a woman: *why don't you have a girlfriend?*

Well, why don't they? Some are the classic nice guys. They have female friends but haven't figured out how to present themselves to women romantically or sexually. Maybe you've had a friend like this, who is nice and sweet but you don't see him as more than a friend. This guy comes to us because women consistently rule him out. He's not a misfit. He's simply someone who has yet to learn how to show you that he'd be great as more than a friend. He's frustrated, but he's smart enough to seek help.

Some men work in careers that demand long hours. Phil, a new doctor and a former client at a bootcamp we held in Atlanta, is a perfect example. He's not bad at flirting or attracting women; he just doesn't meet enough of them. He doesn't want to date at work and he has limited time for a social life. So when he does meet a woman who interests him, he wants to know how to make the most of the opportunity.

Other bootcamp clients are recently divorced and haven't been dating for a while. These men often feel awkward about reentering the dating scene. Our methods help them get back in the game as painlessly and effectively as possible.

And so on.

That said, a lot of men don't have a reason or an excuse to come to Love Systems; they just want to enjoy their dating life more. There are exciting people, experiences, and possibilities that might be open to them if only they knew what to do. One client (Peter, a bank employee in London) described it as wanting "more options and better options."

Some of these men don't lack for female attention as it is. The idea of these men perfecting their skills at a Love Systems bootcamp sometimes rubs women the wrong way. "He's always dating someone new and has lots of women interested in him already," one of my female friends said when she heard that our mutual friend Stephen was going to a Love Systems bootcamp. "Why do you have to teach him Love Systems?"

Although I don't agree with this feeling, I can relate to it. In college, I had a crush on my friend Cathy. One day she won a radio contest for a date with a local celebrity. For the next week before going out with him, she worked out religiously, ate nothing, tried on 192,284 different outfits, and spent more time on her hair and makeup than most brides do for their wedding. I was upset that my friend was being so superficial, and that she was valuing fame over substance. At least that was what I told myself at the time; in reality, of course, I was jealous. She wasn't valuing fame over substance; she was valuing him over me. Worse, it felt like she was moving further out of my league, and that I wouldn't be able to compete with the type of men she found more attractive. When I figured out what was really going on in my head, I resolved to improve myself so that she'd see me as being on her level instead of trying to drag her down to mine.

We can't deny people their ambitions. It's long been socially

acceptable for a woman to work hard on herself to be able to attract the kind of man she wants.⁶ Until recently, the only obvious avenue for men to improve their dating life was to make more money and buy nicer toys. That's a very imperfect, often awkward, and borderline-sleazy dating strategy. Men like Edward, Jesse, Phil, Peter, and Stephen want and deserve better.

MISCONCEPTION #5: HAVING MEN "PRACTICE" FLIRTING ON UNKNOWING WOMEN EXPLOITS AND OBJECTIFIES THEM.

I get it. It's not ideal that Love Systems bootcamps involve men practicing their flirting skills in conversation with women to whom they may not actually be attracted. There are good teaching reasons why our programs have to be set up this way, and clients need to be able to practice and to see instructor demonstrations in real live situations. But these reasons don't change the fact that some women are hurt when they get interested in a man who never calls—because, for him, getting her phone number was practice or training.

Still . . . do we really want to go back to a world where flirting carries an implied obligation to take things further, lest you be accused of leading him on? Have you returned every phone call from every man you've met and made time to go on a date with him? In my experience, more women than men flirt

6. Of course, being permitted this ambition has hardly been much of a victory for women, as it usually came or comes at the cost of being denied the ability to pursue most other ambitions available to men. Still, there's no reason why today a man who wants to make the most of himself to attract the women he likes should be thought of any differently from a woman who wants to make the most of herself to attract the men who interest her.

purely for fun, validation, attention, or for reasons other than genuinely exploring romantic and/or sexual possibilities with someone. This kind of behavior wouldn't be appropriate in a situation in which the other person could reasonably assume that your motivations are straightforward and sincere—like at a singles' mixer or on a blind date—but when we're talking about adults in social situations like nightclubs, you probably already know to leave your expectations at the door.

Now that you know exactly what does (and doesn't) go on at a bootcamp and how we've come by our knowledge of dating and attraction, it's time to get specific. What have we actually learned from doing these bootcamps week in, week out? We'll begin with some of our most consistent observations in the next chapter: "Five Secrets of 100,000 Pickups."

Chapter Two

Five Secrets of 100,000 Pickups

*L*ove Systems has been around in one form or another since 2004. In that time, our instructors have witnessed and/or participated in more than a hundred thousand dating interactions between men and women of almost every social class, race, culture, and type of physical appearance within a wide range of ages. We have paid very careful attention to every one of these pickups and attempted pickups. As a result, we have accumulated a tremendous amount of research into what women actually respond to in a man, via the most reliable method: observing and testing out in the field. This large sample size allows for some strong conclusions that go far beyond the anecdotal. We've been sharing these conclusions with our male clients for years to help them attract and date the women they want; now I'm going to share some of them with you.

I should probably warn you that you may not like or want to believe everything you read here. That's okay. I'll even acknowledge that not everything in this chapter will necessarily apply perfectly to you—any model that treats three billion women as a single group will inevitably have exceptions. But there are also good reasons, which we'll cover in the next

chapter, why what people respond to is often very different from what they *think* they respond to. One hundred thousand approaches don't lie, and the observations and conclusions I'm going to present in this chapter all represent *very* strong tendencies—strong enough that we've used this information to build the methods that we teach our clients, and our clients are very successful at employing what we teach them.

YOU WANT MEN WHO HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Phil—a doctor and former bootcamp client—was and is a bright and affable guy. Popular and well respected at work, he had limited time and energy for a social life, usually preferring to relax with a book or a trip to the gym. When we first met, he definitely came across as highly intellectual and intelligent, but not as someone who anyone would think of as being *cool*.

At the beginning of his bootcamp, Phil was able to approach and introduce himself to women, but couldn't get much of a dialogue going. These women politely answered Phil's questions, but tended to return quickly to their original conversation and even forget that he was there. A few minutes later, Phil would slink back to our group, having generated zero interest. He was confused; most of the women he'd met in his life had been friendly. But the women he was meeting tonight were making no effort to talk to him or get to know him after he introduced himself. That just seemed rude.

One of the instructors took Phil aside and explained to him that he was displaying a lack of Social Intelligence. Phil's behavior was more appropriate for a cocktail party or a work social event, where people wouldn't be more than a degree or two of separation from each other. In such environments,

people are generally inviting and sociable; you probably have mutual friends or interests in common (which is how you both ended up at the same event to begin with), and, at the very least, you wouldn't want to offend whomever invited you by being rude to other guests. But on the bootcamp, the women he was approaching were complete strangers, and Phil did not have any value to them simply by being at the same nightclub. As such, these women felt no obligation to draw him into their conversation. They already had people to talk to, and having Phil standing nearby awkwardly alternating between silence and get-to-know-you questions was not adding anything to their night. Further, he was ignoring social conventions around dating and attraction. If a man approaches a woman, she usually expects him to have something interesting to say and to be able to carry most of the conversation at first. By treating a nightclub as if it were a friendly cocktail party, Phil was projecting a lack of Social Intelligence. The women he met weren't being rude; they were just reacting to this awkwardness.

Phil understood. He got up from our table and approached a group of three women chatting casually near the dance floor. He made a funny comment about the DJ and then started telling them about a dating dilemma he'd just helped a male friend navigate through. He asked the women their opinions and joked with them about some of their advice, even lightly teasing one who particularly caught his eye. Another man who'd had too much to drink started interrupting them and hitting on one of the women; Phil was polite and friendly, but maintained control over the conversation and eventually the other man slunk away. One of the women was impressed by his presence and energy, and invited him back to their table; after making a good impression on everyone in the group,

Phil soon found himself in an intimate conversation with the woman he was most attracted to. If not for our strong suggestion that bootcamp attendees avoid spending the entire night with one woman, Phil might have left the club with her that evening. As it was, Phil made an excuse about why he had to get back to his friends, but not before making plans to see her again.

What turned Phil from a nonstarter to a very attractive catch? His ability to display Social Intelligence. A man with Social Intelligence is someone who can smoothly operate in a variety of situations. He never looks awkward or uncomfortable and never makes anyone else feel that way, either—unless the situation genuinely calls for such measures, in which case he would do so effortlessly. He's the kind of man who always knows the right thing to say and would never embarrass you in front of anyone else. His social skills and understanding of social dynamics let him achieve his goal, whether it's charming the maitre d' into giving him a desired table, smoothly shutting down an annoying interloper, or...meeting you. Women often want to be picked up but don't want to *feel* like they are being picked up. A man who can use his Social Intelligence to break the ice, defuse any awkwardness, and make her and her friends comfortable has a huge advantage over men who can't. Even outside the context of first meeting you, Socially Intelligent men tend to be attractive to women; these men tend to be connected to more people, have access to more interesting events, and simply tend to live more outsized lives than socially awkward men.

Some anthropologists think women's attraction toward men with high levels of Social Intelligence dates back to the earliest days of civilization. In ancient times, the people with the best social skills gained widespread trust and established a

place of importance in the community. Those with poor social skills found themselves ostracized and left out of the loop. The former got ahead and provided for their families in a big way. The latter wound up in situations where they couldn't provide for anyone. Generations of natural selection and cultural reinforcement have taught women that men with high levels of Social Intelligence are likely to offer a good, safe, and affluent life for them and their children, while those with low levels of Social Intelligence will not. The geeks may inherit the earth some day, but they're still probably going to go home alone at night.

Unless you're a rare exception, you are probably attracted to men with strong social skills. In contrast, you probably *don't* feel butterflies in your stomach the first time you talk to shy and awkward men—as much as Hollywood tries to convince you otherwise with an endless diet of movies in which the lovable loser gets the girl at the end. In the next chapter we'll talk about why dating and attraction is depicted so oddly in popular culture; it's not *solely* due to postadolescent wish fulfillment on the part of screenwriters who themselves usually resemble a Steve Carell character more than they do Brad Pitt.

YOU WANT MEN WITH HIGH LEVELS OF STATUS

A man walks into a club (I realize that this sounds like the beginning of a bad joke), skipping the line outside and being greeted warmly by the otherwise stern-looking bouncer. People stop to look at him, and the bartender calls him by name and serves him his favorite drink without his having to order. By the time the man turns away from the bar to check out the scene, several people, both men and women, are coming over

to talk to him. There's an excellent chance that this man is going to hook up tonight.

A different man in that same club doesn't know anyone there, and he's having the kind of miserable night he often has. In another venue, though, he's the king of all he surveys. His job as an advertising executive regularly puts him in front of crowds at media conferences where he speaks with authority about his numerous successes. Afterward, attractive women—of which there is no shortfall in the advertising industry—are always coming up to him and finding excuses to flirt or spend time together.

Both of these men have considerable status within specific settings. The guy at the club is a big deal there, even though he might be stuck in a cubicle at work. The advertising executive is low man on the totem pole at the club, but if you put him on a stage, the women in the audience swoon. If you see either of these guys in his best environment, you're likely to become curious about him and why everyone is giving him respect and valuing him highly. If he makes eye contact with you, you'll probably smile before you even realize you're doing it. But if he were some guy hanging out at the bar and looking lost, or if he were some wannabe in the audience instead of the leading figure on the panel, you'd be much more likely to dismiss his advances, if you even noticed them at all.

Status can also be determined by the society and culture in which you live. There is some variation between cultures, but similarities generally outweigh the differences; for example, most cultures value doctors, lawyers, entertainers, movie producers, athletes, and so on. High-status people and events can also confer status on others. If I'm at James Cameron's birthday party, I have status no matter who I am. If I'm hanging out with Jay-Z, I'm cool even if we're hanging out at Denny's.

While high-status men often have wealth and power, neither of these elements is necessary. Even the lead singer of a mediocre band in a dive bar has a certain amount of status because he's up on stage and everyone, including you, is watching him perform.

Some women are uncomfortable saying that they are attracted to high-status men, because they don't want to be perceived as superficial. Yet there are obvious reasons why a woman might prefer a high-status man. Such men—and their romantic partners—have access to people, events, places, and situations that others simply don't. Moreover, it's often the case that the personality traits that led them to develop status in the first place—ambition, social intelligence, confidence, etc.—are themselves attractive.

Status has an immediate and powerful effect on many women: so powerful that it can completely reverse how a man is perceived. My friend Stephen had a lot of success with women even before his bootcamp and was perhaps a little bit too eager to show off his skills on his first night in the field with us. As soon as we entered the nightclub, he took off from the group in order to “check out the club and see where all the women are.” By the time he found us again, most of the instructors were in the middle of demos, so he went to the bar and had a couple drinks by himself, while looking around for people to talk to. He was completely oblivious to how his behavior was making him look. He was alone and no one knew him at the club, so he just came off as lonely and desperate—not exactly high-status.

Fortunately for Stephen, we'd chosen this particular club in part because it had a few different rooms, each of which was its own self-contained environment, so he had a second chance to make a first impression. A group of us went to the

upstairs lounge first and told Stephen to follow a few minutes later. When he walked through the door, we yelled out his name and gestured for him to come to sit with us. For the next ten minutes, we treated him like a celebrity. He spoke, we listened. He told jokes, we laughed. We hung on his every word. A few minutes later, he introduced himself to an attractive woman who was standing nearby (probably not coincidentally; see chapter 6 on “Proximity”). After a few words, he invited her and her friend to come sit with us. At a table of at least six guys, both women were fixated on him.

Because Social Status is so important to their ability to succeed with women, many men you might find yourself attracted to have spent a lot of time building up their status in certain environments. They’ll travel with people who themselves appear to have status, or, at the very least, they’ll surround themselves with an entourage of people who show them respect. They’ll get to know people who can make them appear high-status in specific venues, like owners, managers, and even bartenders, doormen, waiters, and so on. They don’t do all of this because they want to make sure that their drinks are made just right. It’s because they know you’ll notice and that you’ll be impressed—or at least wonder, “Who *is* this guy?” which you didn’t wonder about the man quietly sitting alone.

YOU WANT MEN WHOM OTHER WOMEN ARE (OR APPEAR TO BE) ATTRACTED TO

I remember first meeting Peter when he was a client at one of our programs in London. He was balding, a little on the short side, and about forty pounds overweight. Early into the first night of his bootcamp, he approached a beautiful brunette coming off the dance floor. She responded politely but

was clearly not attracted to him. Peter watched her continue back to her table, where she sat with her friends, chatting, people watching, and brushing off the random men who kept approaching her.

Peter felt that this woman—let's call her Natasha—was out of his league. I felt that he needed to prove himself wrong, as part of our mission is to help clients like Peter eradicate their limiting beliefs. We gave him a strategy to win Natasha's interest. Every time he walked by her table, he politely said hi to stay on her radar screen, but nothing more than that. Meanwhile, he enjoyed some great conversations with other women, being sure to move around the club with them, at one point even bumping into Natasha and asking her to take a picture of him and his new friend. In short, we arranged the situation so that it looked like several women were vying for Peter's attention. This setup caused an ever-intensifying chain reaction; the more women paid attention to Peter, the more other women became curious about him. They welcomed Peter's approaches because they were already aware of his presence and curious about him.

Eventually, even Natasha noticed. Peter was in the middle of flirting with another woman when Natasha walked by on her way to the dance floor. This time,

Probably the single greatest thing that a man can do to raise his odds with women is to be seen with other attractive women who appear to be interested in him.

he drew her into the conversation for a few minutes, while continuing to talk to the woman he was with originally. The dynamic had definitely changed. By the end of the night, I noticed Natasha walking past our table a couple times when Peter was there, to

see if he'd start talking to her again. Eventually he did, and she was immediately receptive. A few hours earlier, she'd barely

been willing to say two words to him; now she was giving him her phone number.

Probably the single greatest thing that a man can do to raise his odds with women is to be seen with other attractive women who appear to be interested in him.¹ The idea is that other women have already invested time and energy in this man, and they've found him desirable. We call this phenomenon "Preselection," because he has been Preselected for you by other women.

You may be thinking right now that you would never make decisions about a man based on other women's opinions. You have a mind of your own, and you make your own choices based on your own standards. You can probably name several men you've dated whom your friends didn't approve of. And all of these thoughts are most likely true. When you sit down and really think about how you feel about a man, I doubt you put any weight on whether other women happen to be attracted to him. It's probably not something you'd consciously think about at all.

So...am I contradicting myself? Well, no. Preselection works on an instinctive and subconscious level and is mostly useful for efficiently *screening* men in larger groups, not for revealing secrets about one specific man. Women generally screen men for more than just looks; a man's personality and lifestyle are both very important. While the detailed specifics of what you're looking for in these areas might vary from woman to woman—maybe you're attracted to older,

1. This conclusion, which stems from our extensive field research, has more recently attracted support from the academic community. See, for example, Sarah E. Hill and David M. Buss, "The Mere Presence of Opposite-Sex Others on Judgments of Sexual and Romantic Desirability: Opposite Effects for Men and Women," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, no. 5 (May 2008).

sophisticated men with Old World values who know their way around a wine list, while your friend loves New Age spiritualist types—your initial screening filter is probably not very different from your girlfriend's. Is he trustworthy? Emotionally open? Able to take care of himself? Interesting and engaging? Abusive? Married? Does he have Social Status? Social Intelligence? Good hygiene? Most women are looking for the same answers to these questions—and dozens more—before they seriously invest in getting to know a man.

Nonetheless, it's not efficient—and probably not even possible—to screen every man you meet in this way. It wouldn't be very effective, either; while you were spreading your time and energy thinly across a giant pool of men in order to screen them all, your rivals would be using Preselection as a shortcut to find and focus on the men who have *already* been screened. By the time you found these men, they'd probably be off the market anyway. Think of Preselection as a sort of biological TripAdvisor.com or Yelp: instead of having to investigate every hotel in the city you're visiting, you can use others' experiences to narrow your search down to the best few options.

Of course, the initial interest you might feel in a popular man comes from more than your screening instincts. Many of the same qualities that led you to value men who have Social Intelligence and Social Status (charm, confidence, and so on) also apply to a man who is Preselected. Curiosity or even feminine rivalry can also play a role here; winning a man desired by others can simply be more fun than taking a man whom no one else wants. But these factors serve only to reinforce the point that a man who is Preselected is already a step ahead of the competition, before he even comes over to say hello.

Conversely, if a guy approaches you without any endorsement from other women or, worse, fresh from brush-offs from

the last few women he approached, you're likely to feel much more dubious. After all, if no other women find him appealing and you do, you would need to recognize and override your instincts and conclude that you're seeing something in him that no one else does. While this is more common in romance novels than in reality, it's not necessarily impossible—we all find it exciting to discover diamonds in the rough, and you might be the Warren Buffett of dating—but how much of a chance do you want to take on your ability to see what other women can't, when you can choose from Preselected men instead? Probably not a very big one; women are hardwired to be much more risk-averse than men when choosing a mate.²

Earlier, I noted that Preselection and Social Status are similar in that in addition to being attractive qualities in themselves, they are usually associated with a broad array of characteristics that are also attractive. They have another important similarity: they evolved in a very different environment from the one in which we live today. Men who know what they're doing can use your instincts to their advantage. If a man goes to a bar with some of his hottest female friends, he's probably going to generate a great deal of attention that night. He might walk around the room with them, knowing that doing so is likely to draw the attention of other women. He might stop with his friends near a woman who interests him and say something funny or intriguing just to get in her head. If he sets himself up in the room so that his back is to the wall and the other women are facing him, he appears to be holding court and the women appear to be hitting on him. The other women don't

2. The biological purpose of attraction is to successfully pass your genes to the next generation. A man can impregnate multiple women without investing much in any given woman, so he can afford to take risks. A woman can be pregnant with only one man at a time, so she needs to be choosier.

actually have to be there and don't actually have to be real. As an experiment, I used to casually mention to women that the friend who I was out with has dated some of the most beautiful women I've ever met, usually with an offhand reference to models and actresses or Miss November. More often than not, the woman became obviously more interested in my friend after hearing these few words from me.

Of course, a man doesn't have to be deliberately trying to engage your Preselective instincts for them to have an effect. When a man calls you for a second date, you probably know enough about him to decide whether or not to accept, without considering other women's opinions. But if you do go on that second date, you may find yourself more attracted to him without realizing why, if you see other women trying to catch his eye—though you might lose interest in him if he flirts back, since that would show a lack of Social Intelligence *and* be pretty rude.

The Birds and the Bees

Other species use and benefit from Preselection, too. But just as is the case with women, the Preselective instinct in female animals can be influenced or even redirected by changing their environment. For example, the female grouse (a North American bird) generally aims to mate with the one or two most dominant males in its area. Part of how it chooses a mate is by observing mating behavior; after a male grouse has mated with its first female, other females are more likely to mate with him, too. A 1994 study tested the limits of Preselection by putting some stuffed—and clearly lifeless—female grouse beside some mateless males. Grouse are

not adapted for an environment in which researchers trick them with taxidermy—to them, a female grouse is a female grouse, stuffed or not—and so the live females instinctively (but suboptimally) mated with these males.³

You should never see a man bring a mannequin to a nightclub, but the man who brings a couple of his most attractive female friends out with him when he's looking for love is using the human equivalent of the stuffed grouse. And it's almost as effective.

In case you're wondering, Preselection doesn't work for men. If a man sees you with other interested men, he's likely to be *less* attracted to you instead of more. This is because a man's initial instinctive attraction to you is based on your appearance.⁴ A man is perfectly capable of deciding whether he likes the way you look from a quick glance, and there are no efficiency gains available to men from observing who *other* men are attracted to. So if you surround yourself with a group of men, you're not giving off signals to other men that you might be a great catch; rather, you're telling them that the path to your heart (or to your bedroom) is a difficult and competitive one. An equally attractive woman by herself or with other women will be approached much more.

3. Jacob Höglund et al., "Mate-Choice Copying in Black Grouse," *ScienceDirect*, April 28, 2004.

4. As we'll cover in the next chapter, evolution and natural selection have led men to instinctively screen for women who appear to be young, healthy, equipped for childbirth, and not already pregnant. A man can do this screening most efficiently just by looking at you and other women, and only then investing in the women who pass this initial filter.

YOU WANT A CHALLENGE AND A MAN WHO IS CONGRUENT WITH BEING A CHALLENGE

Most women don't need to have sex or make ironclad plans to see a man again in order to feel that they had a fulfilling and sexy experience with him. Flirting is fun in itself. Many men find this perspective baffling, because for them flirting is a means to an end. A man will flirt to get your phone number, to get you out on a date, or to have sex with you; most won't do so just for the fun of it. Or, at least, most men won't regard a flirtatious conversation that doesn't lead to anything as being particularly fulfilling or exciting. This difference between men and women can be seen in other contexts, too, where men focus on the result of an activity while women focus more on the experience or the process. (We'll see later in this book how it applies to dates and to conversations generally.)

Thus, most women will lose interest in flirting with a man if he seems to be too easy a catch. The fun of flirting comes from romantic or sexual tension, ambiguity, and exploring unknown but exciting possibilities. A man who is wrapped around your finger from the get-go supplies none of these things. A woman who isn't much of a challenge won't be very interesting to flirt with, either, but most men won't care about that; they're interested in the result, not the process.

Why do women tend to feel this way? A few reasons. First, people value what they have to work for, and challenges are more mentally stimulating. But more important, being a challenge carries a powerful signaling effect. Whether or not a man is a challenge can tell you a lot about whether *he* thinks he's worthy of you. So far, we've been talking about a lot of

the ways that women use cues and signals to efficiently screen men, since it's not practical to get to know every man who crosses your path. But what if every man you met had a sign over his head that said: "I know myself better than anyone. I know my strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. And I think I [am] / [am not] in your league." Let's make it even better—let's hook that sign up to his instincts instead of his conscious mind so it's hard for him to lie, or even to

*Whether or not a man is
a challenge can tell you
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thinks he's worthy of you.*

know that the sign is above his head in the first place. That would make it easy to focus on the men who at least think they're worthy of you, wouldn't it?

Guess what? That sign exists and you already use it. If you're attractive and fun, but he doesn't have much going for him, he's not going to be a challenge. How could he be? He knows you're out of his league, so if he gets any interest from you, he's going to be all over it like a starving dog on a steak. He'll buy you a drink if you ask him to. He'll wait for you when you go talk to your friends. If you give him your phone number, he'll go back to his friends and high-five them all (you can use that celebration as your cue to change his name in your phone to "do not answer"). And you'll lose any interest you ever had in him and screen him out of your love life. In contrast, a high-value man is not going to jump at the first pretty face he sees. He's going to want you to show him that you're different or special in some way, because amazing men aren't desperate. Preselection teaches us that if he's really all that wonderful, women have been interested in him before. He knows the drill. It's not his first rodeo.

Often, whether a man is a challenge doesn't come out right away. Let's say you meet a man who seems great "on paper": he seems to have a good job, an interesting lifestyle, and a great social circle. You talk for fifteen minutes before your friend reminds you that it's time to leave. He hasn't really gotten to know you (or vice versa), but he seems cute and interesting so, what the hell, you find an excuse to give him your business card. His eyes light up. He gives you an unusually long hug good-bye, and by the time you get home he's already left you a voice mail. If you're like most women, you're not going to call him back. Even if you can't put your finger on why exactly you feel reticent, something doesn't feel right or add up. What you'd be picking up on is that the guy's actions—putting you on a pedestal before you've done much other than show up—aren't congruent with the high-value person you thought he was.

In general, if a man is all over you without knowing anything about you, he's probably shallow, drunk, and/or primarily interested in something physical. Or maybe he has low standards. I'm not trying to be judgmental; there's absolutely nothing wrong with a drunken hookup or a one-night stand if that's what both people want. I just don't want you to be disappointed if you were expecting more from him.

One way that a man can show that he's a challenge—and thus be fun to flirt with—is to act playful, or even tease you, in the same way he might with a good friend whom he has no reason to be nervous around. Doing so communicates that he considers himself to be in your league, and that he's not so awed by you that he's helpless in your presence. We've found this kind of teasing and signaling to be particularly effective in attracting especially beautiful women, who often have trouble finding people willing to be real with them. Most men will

respond to an extremely attractive woman by running and hiding, slaving over her, resenting her for being unattainable, treating her like a dumb sex object, or any number of other ways that don't involve simply interacting with her as a normal human being. But when a man approaches you and is able to joke around, tease you, and not walk on eggshells, he becomes considerably more attractive because he's treating you like a real person instead of like a two-dimensional stereotype.

Of course, you're not just looking for someone who *acts* like a high-value man; you want someone who *is* a high-value man. And this is where congruence comes into play. Many women will run a battery of tests and challenges. If a guy claims to be very successful, they'll ask him questions about his work and travels to see if his answers line up with those a highly successful person would give. If he seems to exude confidence, they might do a little teasing of their own to see how he reacts. If he takes it with good humor and can think on his feet, his confidence is probably real. If he gets flustered or defensive, it's probably just a facade put on to try to impress women. If he seems to be Mr. Right, a woman might introduce sex into the conversation to see if this makes him nervous, flustered, or intimidated, or if it turns him into a hormone-crazed teenager who chases sex like a latter-day Holy Grail. If he does any of these things, he probably hasn't had much success with women and is unlikely to be all that he's cracked up to be. If he were, you can be sure that attractive women would have brought up sex before.

We'll talk more about how you can use congruence tests to help you screen men in chapter 9. For now, know that you probably use them at least a little bit already, and not only along the lines of the above examples. Even waiting to have sex is in its own way a congruence test. In the early days of Love Systems,

I would often “debrief” women after we’d begun a sexual relationship. I asked them when and why they became attracted to me; at the time, I thought that I could use this information to develop the system—to focus on the parts that were working and change the rest. I remember one woman telling me that she liked me from the first moment we met, so I asked her why she resisted my advances until we’d gone on a couple dates. “I just wanted to see if you’d screw it up,” she replied.

Of course, your attraction to challenging and congruent men stems from more than signaling. Such men are also more likely to be good at setting boundaries later. Most women aren’t looking for a pushover, and while you might want a deep and close connection with your man, you probably don’t want his life to revolve around yours.

**YOU DO TRULY WANT SOME OF THE THINGS
YOU’RE “SUPPOSED” TO LIKE: DECENT
LOOKS, A GOOD DRESSER, CONFIDENCE,
AND THE ABILITY TO PROVIDE FOR
HIMSELF AND OTHERS**

These last attributes likely won’t come as a surprise to you; you probably know that you’re looking for some of these things in a man. I’m simply stating them here because our research has reinforced them so strongly, and I want to give you a complete picture of what we’ve found.

The interesting thing about what women expect from men in the looks department is how different it is from what men expect from women. To oversimplify, men want to know what women look like with their clothes off; women want to know what men look like with their clothes *on*. Aesthetics aside, many women perceive that a man’s dress carries important

signals about who he is. A classic example: women will give a guy points for having polished shoes because that indicates that he cares about the impression he makes and that he pays attention to detail. But this signaling effect goes even further. Many women might look right past a nice-looking guy in standard-issue khakis and a buttoned-down shirt even if they look like they've come straight from the dry cleaner, because a man dressing in this way is signaling that he doesn't have the confidence, personality, or social skill to express himself as anything other than a generic guy who just runs with the pack. Our observation of one hundred thousand approaches has shown us that women respond to men who are willing to show some flair in the way they dress. Some men take this idea to comical extremes and end up looking ridiculous, which shows a lack of Social Intelligence and is counterproductive. However, a man able to express himself without looking clownish or unfashionable, maybe with one or two interesting accessories, tends to get the attention of women. I have never had a woman tell me I'm attractive when I'm in my normal day-to-day clothes. But when I get dressed for a party or big event, it does happen on occasion—and, to build on our earlier look at Preselection, it happens *much* more often when I'm with a beautiful woman.

In short, a man who dresses well signals that he has self-respect, a willingness to take chances, Social Intelligence, confidence, and attention to detail. Having a face and body like Bradley Cooper or Jake Gyllenhaal doesn't hurt, but it's not really necessary. Most men can come off as good-looking enough, with the right haircut and a new outfit, that their looks won't stand in the way of them attracting beautiful women. Love Systems clients often book such shopping trips with instructors, who can turn a "2" into a "7" in an afternoon

with a few hundred dollars spent the right way at the mall. I always remind our male clients to be grateful for how easy it is to improve their looks (and hence why there is no excuse not to do so), because it isn't anywhere near as easy for women.

As far as body language is concerned, there's nothing inherently sexual about it. Men with good posture and a confident stance who make strong eye contact aren't necessarily broadcasting sexuality in any way. Yet women will consistently prefer men who do have good body language to men who do not. Like so many of the attributes that draw women to men, there's an evolutionary component here. Since successful men naturally tend to carry themselves with more presence, women can quickly and efficiently scan for such men by looking for those who display confident body language. Moreover, it's much more difficult for people to be convincingly deceptive through their nonverbal communication than through what they say. It's easy to teach a man how to *sound* confident; we run sophisticated body language drills in our bootcamps because it's much harder to *project* a confidence that may not represent a man's true feelings at the time. Because nonverbal signals are more honest, women tend to rely on them more.

And then there's the matter of money. For some reason, wealth has become an almost taboo subject in dating; we're not supposed to talk about it, and we're supposed to pretend that women should be equally interested in a man whether he's rich or poor. Of course, valuing a man *solely* for the size of his wallet would be as superficial as a man valuing you purely for the size of your chest. But such blatant gold diggers are not all that common and are certainly rarer than one would expect from popular culture—and I've lived the last few years in Hollywood, where you'd most expect such women to be found.

Nonetheless, wealth—or at least the ability to achieve wealth—does matter. Like some of the other attractive characteristics we’ve covered in this chapter, wealth is often associated with other qualities that women find attractive: ambition, determination, responsibility, and so on. And like Social Status, a man with wealth has access to people, opportunities, and places that other men do not. Plus, if you’re thinking long-term, his ability to help provide can also be an important factor. Finally, many women who themselves earn a good income might be uncomfortable being with a man who does not, or the income difference might make *him* feel uncomfortable. We’ll cover the intersection of money and dating in more detail in chapter 4.

WHAT ALL OF THIS MEANS TO YOU

I realize that at this point you might still be questioning some of these conclusions. We’re going to talk about why that might be the case in the next chapter. Keep this in mind, though: Love Systems exists because it has an extraordinary success rate in helping men date and attract the women whom they are interested in. The techniques that we teach are based on observations and conclusions like the ones we discussed in this chapter. Men who have repeatedly failed with women before coming to see us go home with attractive women, or at least their phone numbers, after their very first day at a Love Systems bootcamp. It isn’t because we’ve taught them some secret way to trick women or screw with their minds; rather, it’s because we’ve shown them what you’re looking for and we’ve shown them how to communicate with you in a way that you’ll find attractive and compelling.

In fact, you can use the counterintuitive or surprising

nature of these observations and conclusions to your advantage. For one thing, you'll be able to see past the posers trying out their game on you. For another, you'll understand more about why you feel attracted to certain kinds of men and not others, and be able to decide whether that's a good thing or not. Maybe you'll want to embrace your instincts, or maybe you'll want to ignore some of them so you can give more of a chance to specific kinds of men whom you might be excluding now. Either way, it's a win-win for you.

And that's just scratching the surface; the whole second half of this book is about using this information to your advantage to get the men that you want.

Chapter Three

Why Is Dating So Different From How It Is “Supposed” to Work?

As we’ve seen, a lot of Love Systems contradicts conventional wisdom and goes against how most women see themselves. In fact, the more we’ve discovered about how attraction works in the real world, the more we’ve realized that most of what people *think* they know about attraction is flat-out wrong. It pains me to see so many people wanting so much to improve their love life and working so hard to do so—but doing exactly the wrong things.

Well, how on earth did *that* happen? Why is there so much misinformation about how attraction works?

I have some ideas, but I also have to caution you before we continue that there isn’t one simple answer; many factors (we’re about to go through seven of them) have helped drive us to where we are now. Or, if you like, there are at least seven different places where you can place the blame for today’s dating myths and misinformation.

BLAME YOUR BRAIN

People think they know what they want, but often don't. Focus group participants told Ford that they wanted to drive an Edsel and assured Coca-Cola that New Coke was a winner. Both of those companies lost a fortune because they trusted people to know their own minds. As author and journalist Malcolm Gladwell put it, it's simply futile to expect people to predict their actions:

Asking someone to explain [their behavior and intent] is not only a psychological impossibility...but it biases them in favor of the conservative, in favor of the known over the unknown.¹

Gladwell said this in a speech to advertising industry executives about consumer goods like fruit juice and soap. If people can't even figure out what kind of drink they like or how they like to wash their clothes, what chance do they have with something as complicated and emotional as relationships? Especially since *thinking* about what you want sexually or romantically is a logical process, but the decisions you make in the moment are based on emotion more than on logic. Emotion and logic are controlled by two different areas of your brain, so it's almost like asking your feet to choose a pair of gloves. You can think and make lists about what you're looking for all you want on Wednesday afternoon, but that's not the part of your brain that is running the show on Saturday night.

1. Quoted in David Kiley, "Shoot the Focus Group," *BusinessWeek*, November 13, 2005.

This separation of logic and emotion applies to everyone, not just naïve or inexperienced women. I used to work with an attractive, intelligent divorcée in her forties by the name of Donna. She never lacked for attention from men but was rarely satisfied with her love life. She told me that she always seemed to end up with unemotional and extremely independent men, and that she really wanted to meet someone who was sweet, affectionate, and emotionally available. But every time she was introduced to one, the night ended with her saying, “let’s just be friends.” Last I heard, she was getting remarried: to a stoically tough man with a hard shell. What people *think* they want or what they *say* they want is often not what they really want, or at least not what they actually respond to.

Such contradictory behavior is easier to see in others than in ourselves. We like to believe that our actions and decisions make sense, so we convince ourselves—after the fact—that there are good reasons for the choices we make. Psychologists call this process rationalization. Remember how I said that in the early days of Love Systems, I used to debrief women whom I’d hooked up with or dated to find out what exactly I did to attract them? The idea was that this information could help me figure out which of our methods were working and which needed to be changed or discarded. But it turned out that this effort was nearly always useless, because the reasons these women gave were usually related to things they learned about me well *after* it was clear that they were attracted to me. In other words, these women felt attraction, acted on that attraction, and *then* looked for reasons to try to explain why they felt what they felt. And that, as I realized later, is how attraction really works. Sometimes I would even tell these women about Love Systems. Almost universally the reaction was “That would never work on me.” I never pointed out the irony.

What I learned from these debriefs did feed into Love Systems, just not in the way that I expected. When a woman says, “I’ve usually dated men like [X] and now I’m looking for a [Y] guy,” most men make the mistake of trying to emphasize their qualities that fit with what she *says* she is looking for. Instead, Love Systems teaches men to emphasize what she actually responds to. Obviously, this principle can be taken too far. Clearly some relationship exists between what people say they want and what they actually respond to. It’s just not anywhere near the 100 percent correlation that many people assume—especially about themselves.

BLAME YOUR GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Actually, you’ll have to go many generations further back, but the answer is in the genes that your ancestors passed down to you.² Has it ever bothered you when a man chooses a brainless bimbo with big breasts and nice curves over a smarter and more sophisticated woman who might be a better match? Did you think to yourself, *Men are pigs*? That might be true, but it’s incomplete. Men are pigs *for a reason*.

Our genes have one goal and one goal only: to be passed on to as many healthy and reproducing offspring as possible. Many generations ago, men who happened to prefer young women with curvy hips and big breasts were at an advantage; these women had fewer health risks and less difficulty conceiving, and the children they had by these women were more likely to

2. There is some controversy about whether evolution or deep-seated cultural traditions (or some combination of the two) is the more important factor with what I’m about to talk about here. I’ve opted for evolution in this book, but for our purposes it doesn’t matter. The critical point is that what people instinctively think is attractive in a mate is strongly influenced to a large extent by what was important in a partner many thousands of years ago.

survive childbirth and infancy.³ Since these children would tend to inherit the same preferences, repeating this process generation after generation led to a large population of breast- and curve-loving men. This process can be seen across different cultures.⁴

Moreover, men don't just *like* young women with nice curves in the same way that a man might like his favorite song or a classic car. Our brains are literally hard-wired to notice such women and release a "reward" chemical in our brain when we do.⁵ (This is one reason why it's pointless and futile to be upset when your man looks at other women—but more on that in chapter 11.) Biologically, a man's genes want him looking at women because most of what a man needs to know about whether you'd be a good mate can be determined just by looking at you.

With modern medicine, hip and breast size aren't as crucial to having or raising healthy children. For that matter, even sex has nothing to do with reproduction most of the time. So why do some men still couple up with the bimbo? For the same reason that most people like salty food, fear spiders and snakes, and are born with an appendix. For much of human history, these characteristics conferred an advantage.⁶ But technological and social change has altered our environment so much that what was useful on the prehistoric savannah doesn't apply as well, or sometimes at all, to a twenty-first-century environment.

3. Grazyna Jasienska et al., "Large Breasts and Narrow Waists Indicate High Reproductive Potential in Women," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 271, no. 1545 (June 22, 2004).

4. Sarah E. Hill and David M. Buss, "The Mere Presence of Opposite-Sex Others on Judgments of Sexual and Romantic Desirability: Opposite Effects for Men and Women," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, no. 5 (May 2008).

5. Steven M. Platek and Devendra Singh, "Optimal Waist-to-Hip Ratios in Women Activate Neural Reward Centers in Men," *PLoS ONE* 5, no. 2 (February 5, 2010).

6. A. Ohman and S. Mineka, "Fears, Phobias, and Preparedness: Toward an Evolved Module of Fear and Fear Learning," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 3 (July 2001).

Female sexual impulses can be just as out-of-date. For example, a man with a lot of testosterone (as indicated by toned muscles, a larger lower face and jaw, a prominent brow, etc.) might have kept your female ancestors and their offspring safe, but in today's world, too much testosterone in a man's body can hurt his and his family's chances of evolutionary success.⁷ Of course, as we know, most of what makes you instinctively attracted to a man is not based on his looks. This fact actually makes things *more* complicated for women than for men. As a man, I have little difficulty distinguishing between conscious and subconscious attraction. I might have a strong initial reaction to the 36Ds on a gorgeous woman walking by, but I also know it's not really love at first sight and that it's my genes (or what is inside my jeans) talking. But when you get to know a man, there may be things that attract you on a conscious level: aspects of his personality that you like, interests you have in common, and so on. These will fire off "I'm attracted to him" messages in your brain. But so will characteristics that attract you on an instinctive, subconscious level, like the ones we explored in the previous chapter. It can be extremely difficult to distinguish between:

- (A) "I'm attracted to him on an instinctive primal level, but I'm going to try to explain it as if it were logical anyway," and
- (B) "I'm attracted to him for logical reasons that I can logically explain."

Let's say you're attracted to a man who happens to have high Social Status. As we've covered, your interest in such men

7. Nicholas Wade, "She Doesn't Trust You? Blame the Testosterone," *New York Times*, June 7, 2010. See also "Sexual Selection: Facing the Truth," *Economist*, March 2, 2006.

is based on a biological preference that comes from our ancestors, but also has relevance today: for example, a high-status man may be able to give you access to more interesting places, people, and experiences than his rivals. But your attraction is still based on instincts, not on logic. We know this because men with Social Status are more attractive to women even where that status provides no meaningful advantage. For example, bartenders get much more attention from women when they're working than when they're hanging out, because of their status in the narrow environment of one night at a bar. I've been propositioned by women based on the mere fact that they remembered seeing my face on television.

*Men with Social Status
are more attractive
to women even where
that status provides no
meaningful advantage.*

The prehistoric savannah never had to teach us the difference between real social status that confers genuine advantages, like being well respected within the tribe, and social status that has no meaning and/or applies only to a very narrow environment, like being on TV or being a bartender. The latter kind of status simply cannot exist when everyone has known everyone else for a long period of time, and everyone spends their time in more or less the same way. Even if Caveman Oog looked like the high-status man in your distant ancestor's tribe for a brief moment when he was the most successful man on a hunt, this information wouldn't be *all* she would have known about him. From living in the same tribe for years—a tribe small enough that everyone would have known each other—she would have known that he was just a random hunter who got lucky that day. But in the modern urban environment, a snapshot can be the whole story; there are enough separate and distinct social

hierarchies that any man can appear to be high-status in the right environment. If one of Oog's descendants spent every Tuesday night getting to know the regulars at your local hang-out and then you happened to drop in one random Tuesday, you might instinctively perceive him as high-status. And if you didn't happen to know him, you wouldn't know he lives in his mother's basement.

Of course, we're not slaves to our biology. Every day we suppress our instincts—to fight, to overindulge, and so on—when they're not helpful in our current environment. But these feelings do affect us in many powerful and imperceptible ways, and being conscious of them will help everyone make better decisions.

BLAME YOUR HORMONES

The general point that people often don't know what they really want affects men and women equally and applies to all areas of life. But for women, this dynamic can be even more challenging when it comes to dating; your hormones can play havoc with your perception and decision making when it comes to sex and relationships in a way that simply doesn't happen for men.

A 2004 study asked a group of women to rate how attracted they were to photographs of different men.⁸ About half of these pictures depicted men who had particularly square chins and jaws and other indicators of high levels of testosterone, while the other half showed men who displayed a marked absence of these features. What the study seemed to

8. Elizabeth G. Pillsworth, Martie G. Haselton, and David M. Buss, "Ovulatory Shifts in Female Sexual Desire," *Journal of Sex Research* 41, no. 1 (February 2004).

show at first was that—surprisingly—women didn’t tend to prefer testosterone-filled men at all. Some did, but some preferred the more “baby-faced” men, and others didn’t seem to demonstrate much of a pattern at all.

Did we just contradict one of the key points of this chapter—that evolution has a strong influence on what we consider to be attractive today? Not at all. Because the study also found that women *did* express an intense preference for the high-testosterone men, but only when two conditions were *both* met:

1. The woman reported that she was ovulating at the time.
2. The woman reported being in a long-term, committed relationship.

What possible benefit could this sort of conditional preference bring you? First, a woman who doesn’t normally like high-testosterone men may still be attracted to such men when she’s able to get pregnant. These men don’t always make great long-term partners. Their evolutionary strategy is generally to mate with as many women as possible and commit to none; you might recognize this behavior among some men today. But high-testosterone men *do* have strong genes, which will give your offspring the best chance to thrive.

Hold on a second. It can be hard enough being a single mother in the twenty-first century; wouldn’t getting pregnant by a man who was less likely to stick around have been an evolutionary *disadvantage* in a prehistoric environment?⁹

9. Human babies and children are especially vulnerable and have a much longer development process than most other animals, and so there are important biological and evolutionary reasons for the father to stick around and provide resources and protection that don’t apply to the same extent in other species. In most other animals, and even in 95 percent of other mammals, the father has no involvement with offspring.

Yes, absolutely—and that's where the study's second observation comes into play: your genes want you to risk hooking up with these men only when you already have a stable home life in which to raise children. If you've ever felt unaccountably attracted to someone—especially if he's not your type and you're perfectly happy with your boyfriend and not looking for anyone else—you're not going crazy and you're not a bad person. You're simply a woman with normal hormones that are doing what normal hormones do: trying to help you pass on your genes as effectively as possible. And possibly confusing the heck out of you in the process.

In Love Systems, we encourage a man who gets your phone number to call or text you at least once per week for at least a couple more weeks, even if you didn't seem especially interested in him the first time he called. There are many reasons for this strategy, but one of them is a recognition that you may feel more or less attracted to him at different points in your cycle. Similarly, it does happen that one of our clients may develop a connection with a woman who has a boyfriend or is married. (It's not our job to play ethicist; we're talking about adults who can make their own decisions.) In that situation, it's almost always better to push for something to happen right away, since—among other reasons—he should strike while the iron is hot and before her hormones change.¹⁰

Your hormones can give you even more confusing signals if you take medication that affects them. Some birth control pills have the side effect of actually reversing how your brain interprets a man's smell. Normally, when his scent is attractive

10. Foremost among these other reasons is that both men and women, when in a relationship, are more likely to jump into something passionate, when their emotions are engaged in the moment, than they are to battle guilt and the threat of detection to engage in a more drawn-out courtship.

to you, it means that he is likely to have a strong immune system, and, in addition, that his genetic profile combined with yours would be likely to lead to healthy offspring. But if you start taking one of the “reversing” birth control pills, you’ll find yourself unaccountably attracted to men in whom you probably had not previously been interested (and who for good measure probably don’t have great immune systems and/or compatible genetic profiles), while pushing away men whom you’d previously been attracted to and who, biologically speaking, probably would have made a great catch. That’s got to be pretty confusing as well, especially if you change from one type of pill to another.¹¹

Your hormones don’t only influence attraction; they also affect how different men make you feel when you’re with them, especially sexually. On average, you’re going to have more orgasms in bed with men who your genes “want” you to have children with: that is, men with good genes. Why orgasms? Some scientists believe that orgasms make it more likely for you to get pregnant. It’s also possible that you’re more likely to have sex with a man again if he gives you an orgasm the first time around. Or maybe both theories are true. Either way, we are left with further evidence that your hormones are trying to influence your choices.¹²

And not just *your* choices either—your hormonal cycle also affects how men perceive you. During menstrual bleeding,

11. S. C. Roberts et al., “MHC-Related Odour Preferences in Humans and the Use of Oral Contraceptives,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 275, no. 1652 (December 7, 2008); T. K. Saxton et al., “Evidence That Androstadienone, a Putative Human Chemosignal, Modulates Women’s Attributions of Men’s Attractiveness,” *Hormones and Behavior* 54, no. 5 (November 2008).

12. David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton, *How Women Got Their Curves and Other Just-So Stories: Evolutionary Enigmas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

when you can't get pregnant, you look and smell less attractive to men, but when you're ovulating you look and smell more attractive. How much more? Most of the time it's hard to quantify attraction or desire—no guy in the world would say you were 23 percent more attractive to him last week compared to today—but strip clubs can give us interesting data: take the same women with the same dance moves and the same ability to hustle, and watch her tips go up and down over her cycle. On average, dancers' tips *doubled* when they were ovulating.¹³ So if an attractive guy walked right past you on Sunday but stopped to chat you up today, it might have something to do with your outfit or hairstyle, or he might be responding to changes in hormonal signals that you're sending him: signals that neither of you would even be conscious of.

In sum, there is a lot going on at the hormonal level that influences how you may feel about different men, and how different men may feel about you. These influences change from day to day, are generally imperceptible, and act to further increase the gulf between perception and reality when it comes to how attraction really works.

BLAME THE MEDIA

Ever since you first learned about sex, attraction, and relationships, the media has been trying to tell you how they work. I don't mean that your favorite TV shows started getting interrupted by announcements telling you how to get a boyfriend, or even that "the media" is an entity capable of having a conscious, collective point of view. But undeniably, we all consume many

13. Geoffrey Miller, Joshua M. Tybur, and Brent D. Jordan, "Ovulatory Cycle Effects on Tip Earnings by Lap Dancers: Economic Evidence for Human Estrus?" *Evolution and Human Behavior* 28, no. 6 (November, 2007).

messages from various media about how people get attracted to each other and how dating and relationships work.

The truth is that most of these messages are misleading. Because love, sex, and attraction are universal human experiences, it's easy for anyone to assume that they are an expert. (Ask your friends whether they give good dating advice; most will say that they do.) Screenwriters are no exception: most wouldn't dream of writing a period piece without doing research or consulting a historian, but few adopt such a rigorous approach when depicting their characters in romantic situations. Instead, they rely on their own knowledge—and cinematic convention, discussed below—about dating and attraction, which effectively perpetuates a fantasy world. I live in Hollywood and have trained many of these fellows personally. None of them had any special insight or skill before their Love Systems program.

While false and misleading information can be found in all areas of life, the impact of misinformation in messages we receive from the media is especially strong, for two reasons. First, there are a lot of them. Because sex and attraction are subjects almost anyone can relate to and are emotionally powerful, these subjects get used often to advance a plotline, define a character, sell products in advertisements, and so on. Second, the misinformation isn't random. There are established conventions about how romance works. Audiences are used to courtships happening in specific, predictable ways, and they become invested in the fates of the characters. Whether you grew up with *Sixteen Candles* and *Revenge of the Nerds* or *Clueless* and *Superbad*, the main character ends up with the person they're supposed to be with, in a way that would never happen in reality.

In other words, we all take in many messages from the

media about dating and attraction, and these messages have a generally consistent but inaccurate point of view. Even consuming five such messages per day (a low estimate for anyone even vaguely connected to popular culture) from the time you were ten to the time you were twenty would give you a cumulative total of approximately twenty thousand. The human brain is simply not equipped to see the same pattern twenty thousand times and dismiss it. In fact, the opposite occurs; people don't like to have two opposing ideas in their head (a phenomenon psychologists call "cognitive dissonance"), so they dismiss information that contradicts the dominant pattern. We'll cover how this process works in more detail in chapter 6, when we talk about first impressions. For now, it's enough to know that our brains are remarkably attached to what we think we know, and we don't like this information to be challenged. In fact, at Love Systems bootcamps we sometimes have to help our clients *unlearn* many of the messages that they've internalized before they can be successful with women and dating.

None of the above is to say that people blindly act out what they see on TV.¹⁴ I've probably seen thousands of murders on-screen but I haven't killed anyone. However, people *do* internalize messages about patterns and how things work. I think that my thousands of on-screen murders have given me a decent idea about how a gun works, even though I've never fired one myself, or what a murder investigation looks like, even though I've never been involved with one. If we see a pattern repeated enough times, our instinct is to accept it as authoritative—without even being aware that we are doing

14. Or what they consume through other media—we'll just use TV as an example, but the same principle holds for books, movies, music, and so on.

so—whether or not it happens to be accurate. The media gives us a warped and unrealistic perspective of how dating and attraction works, and it gives us this view in such a powerful dose that it's difficult to be completely free of its influence.

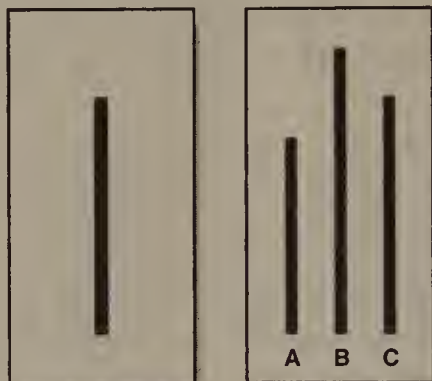
BLAME SOCIETY—OR YOUR FRIENDS

If the media can't give you the truth, at least you can rely on your friends and family, right? Unfortunately, your friends and family probably contribute as much to romantic confusion as they solve, because they've got many of the same blinders as you do. In addition, they can unhelpfully influence you through their own biases, expectations, and opinions and/or channel the pressure and judgment that all societies put on women and your sex and dating life. Your friends may actually be sabotaging you—consciously or otherwise.

You might not think that you'd be very influenced by others' opinions of what you should do with your love life, and you might be right. But you'd be an exception if so. Conformity is surprisingly pervasive. For example, there was a famous series of experiments in the 1950s where people were asked to estimate the length of various line segments. These tests were not particularly difficult (see figure on page 62). Unknown to the test subjects, the other "participants" in the study were actually confederates of the researchers who were instructed to give correct answers during the first two trials and incorrect answers in all that followed. The test subjects, asked to give their answers last or next-to-last in each group, almost always determined the correct answer when the other participants did so as well. But after the confederates started

*And women were twice
as likely to conform to
peer pressure as men.*

ASCH CONFORMITY EXPERIMENT EXAMPLE TRIAL



In groups of five to seven each, test subjects and confederate participants were shown a line like the one on the left-hand card above, and then asked to identify which of the line segments on the right-hand card most closely approximated the original segment's length. The test subject's propensity to conform was tested by having most of the confederates give the same wrong answer, either A or B in this example, before the test subject answered.

SOURCE: Reproduced from video of one such trial: www.ItsYourMoveBook.com/Conformity

giving wrong answers (the same wrong answer in each trial), approximately one-third of the test subjects did so as well. Three-quarters of the test subjects gave at least one incorrect (but conforming) answer. And women were twice as likely to conform to peer pressure as men.¹⁵ These famous studies became known as the Asch Conformity Experiments.

Conformity works just as well even when no one is there giving the wrong answer as long as people are aware of what

15. R. Bond and P. B. Smith, "Culture and Conformity: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Using Asch's Line Judgment Task," *Psychological Bulletin* 119, no. 1 (1996).

the right answer is. For a long period of time, black candidates for political office in the United States tended to receive fewer votes than suggested by opinion polls conducted just before the election. One theory (the Bradley Effect) proposed that some racist white voters felt pressure to conform to implied antiracist expectations—even to an anonymous pollster on the other end of the telephone, and even when there would have been perfectly legitimate reasons to support another candidate—and lied that they planned to vote for the black candidate.

In these examples, people tended to conform even when there was little pressure or incentive to do so. As the pressure rises, the tendency to conform increases as well. It's understandable that many women react to the potentially immense weight of social judgment, pressure, and expectations that gets put on them by even their closest friends and family, as well as by society at large. Some women try to fully embrace expectations. My friend Donna insisted for month after month that she wanted the kind of nice, sweet guy she was supposed to want, and accordingly she spent month after month going home lonely after bland, spark-free dates with such men before she stopped fighting her instincts. Other women conform for appearances. I have many female friends who will occasionally have a one-night stand but will also make judgmental comments about other women who they've seen do the same thing. They're channeling social expectations and protecting themselves by implying that they don't act in the same way.

Love Systems makes use of this information. When I teach men about female psychology, especially as it pertains to sex and dating, I tell guys to look for cues from a woman's friends, as every social group has its own unwritten rules. For example, I would approach a woman very differently if her friends seemed to be the "we came together; we leave together" type than

I would if her friends seemed more open-minded. Similarly, many of our techniques to sexualize a pickup on the same night have nothing to do with making you desire the man in question; of course, he does need to get you to want him, but often the more challenging part of a pickup comes in helping you leave with him without incurring judgment from your friends.

But where does all of this social pressure and judgment come from? Every culture I know seeks to control female sexuality in some way. There were good reasons for this once. In more primitive societies, social cohesion was absolutely necessary for survival. A woman who was free to explore her sexuality would have been extremely dangerous. There's nothing to make men fight like being in competition for the same woman, and any group of young men who have fallen out over a woman can tell you that these fissures don't heal easily. Sometimes these feuds escalate and involve friends, family, and other allies, where the original cause of the dispute is eventually rendered irrelevant by cycles of attacks and counterattacks. One of the earliest extant works of Western literature, Homer's *Iliad*, traces the decade-long Trojan War that encompassed most of the then-known world to marital competition for Helen of Troy.¹⁶ To the extent that controlling women and their sexual behavior reduced conflict within a society, that society—and its members—probably had a better chance to thrive.

Even though the world has changed significantly since Homer's day, attitudes take a long time to catch up. Myths abound; for example, that you aren't supposed to enjoy sex as much as men, or even be interested in sex at all. Or that women are inherently more monogamous than men, which

16. *The Iliad* is of course not history, and the causes of the Trojan War are unknowable today. But it's clear that even audiences from the early days of civilization did not have trouble with the idea of competition for a woman precipitating a "world" war.

simply isn't true. Or that women must be identified as a "good girl" or a "bad girl" (or the more classic virgin/whore complex) based on her attitudes to sex and dating. Of course, sensible people know that these ideas are inaccurate and diminish women, but they do have a pervasive hold on popular culture. Women who are comfortable and confident in their nonmonogamous sex life are not generally depicted positively; often the unstated message is that such women will never find a man for the long term. Or think of the last book, movie, or TV show you saw where there was a couple and one partner wanted more sex in their relationship and the partner did not. Who was depicted as wanting more sex? Who was depicted as being generally uninterested in sex? In reality, there are no inherent gender-wide differences between men's and women's desire for sex when in a committed relationship.¹⁷

In other words, your friends are probably subject to the same biases that you are. They might not even be admitting their true feelings to themselves, let alone sharing them with you. Not to mention that women sometimes deliberately sabotage each other out of feelings of jealousy or competition. By all means listen when they have something to say, but don't end up like Mr. Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, regretting a life spent in the service of someone else's values. If you're going to make mistakes, let them at least be *your* mistakes made while pursuing the life that *you* want.

BLAME YOUR EGO

No one wants to feel that they are not in complete control of themselves, or that their actions don't always square up with

17. Tom J. Tiegs et al., "My Place or Yours?" *Sex Roles* 56, nos. 7–8 (April 2007).

their self-image. In fact, that's one of the reasons why people rationalize their behavior after the fact in the first place.

I remember reading a sales and persuasion book that a former colleague had recommended to me, and I noticed that she had used a lot of the techniques in the book to persuade me to sponsor a table at a fund-raiser she was involved with. For reasons I couldn't quite explain, this irritated me. I even allowed myself to go down the road of "that's not really what she was doing" and "that's not the part of it that worked on me," until I had to admit to myself that I'm not that special of a snowflake and psychological and persuasive techniques that generally work on humans will generally work on me, too. And all over a table at a fund-raiser. I can only imagine how much more intense my feelings would have been if I'd been given the script for how I was led into a sexual or dating decision. Remember those women with whom I was involved who insisted that Love Systems would never work on them? While the irony *is* amusing, I do understand their reaction.

Most women feel (unnecessarily) diminished by the idea that they can be picked up. All the more so if the man is using techniques he read in a book or learned in a class. In a society that insists on tying a woman's sexual and romantic decisions so closely to her identity, it's not surprising that many women would instinctively feel devalidated and threatened by the idea that a man could learn how to pick her up from a book.

Actually, as a practical application, calling attention to this feeling is one of the most powerful ways to *prevent* a pickup from happening, which is something we teach at our boot-camps. Let's say one of our guys is interested in you, but there's a rival on the scene. Not someone you have any connection with—just another random guy. Normally in this situation, it's a question of who blinks first. If one man seems more

confident, more poised, and has more presence, the other guy usually slinks away. But sometimes he doesn't. And if he doesn't, then our client might destroy his chances with you by saying something like:

"Oh sorry, I didn't realize you were trying to pick her up. It's cool, man. Tell you what, she and I will put our conversation on hold for a minute so you can give her your pitch. [Pause] Go ahead man, tell her how you feel; she won't bite."

In this situation, there is next to zero chance that you will end up attracted to the other guy. And that's mostly because you don't want to be seen to be picked up, even if you are a single woman at a place like a nightclub, where it's totally appropriate for you to meet and flirt with men. But it's nearly impossible for a man to succeed when the situation is set up in this way.¹⁸

Now, you might be doubting this conclusion because there have probably been times when a man has approached you and your friends, you all knew he was trying to pick you up, and it worked. But the difference is plausible deniability—an important concept in Love Systems. As long as you can plausibly deny what is going on ("Oh, we're just talking; he's really funny"), the situation is safe and comfortable and you can let yourself be attracted. Once you've already decided that you're attracted to someone, plausible deniability is far less important. But if a man approaches you when others are watching and listening and tells you that he's trying to pick you up—well, let's just say that he'd better be *extremely* charming or good-looking. It's totally natural to fight against what I'm

18. Incidentally, if you've ever seen us on TV, the previous paragraph explains why we always say no when an interviewer says "Okay, show me how you'd get me attracted to you" or "My assistant is standing over there—go get her phone number." It's a trap—we work only on hidden camera.

presenting here. You can pretend that none of this material would ever work on you and that you *are* a special snowflake. But one thing you can't do is pretend that none of this is going on. To quote one of my favorite TV characters, Omar from *The Wire*: "The game is out there. It's play or get played."

BLAME SCIENTISTS

This point might seem odd, given that I have already liberally sprinkled references to various studies in this book. Those are the good ones. But for every so-called scientific study that sheds some light on how dating and attraction works, there are three or four that obfuscate it.

Let's take a recent example—how much skin should a woman show when she's going out to meet men? That's a pretty interesting question, right? I've overheard more conversations than I could count where women ask each other if their outfits are too conservative or too revealing. Women in the UK were recently treated to breathless articles in mainstream newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* about a "scientific" study that "proves" that they should leave 40 percent of their skin uncovered as an optimum balance between showing they are attractive and seeming too easy or available.¹⁹ On the surface, this information is useful for women. But dig a little deeper (as few would do) back to the original study, and here's what you'll find:

- The entire study was conducted on one night in one nightclub in one city. That's clearly ridiculous—the optimal

19. Fiona Macrae, "How to Woo a Man...Flash 40% of Your Flesh: Science (and a Few Nights Out) Solve an Old Dilemma," *Daily Mail*, November 17, 2009; "Women 'Should Bare 40 Per Cent of Their Bodies to Attract Men,'" *Telegraph*, November 17, 2009.

amount of skin to show (if there is such a thing) is going to be very different at a college bar on a weekend night than at an upscale club on a weeknight.

- The researchers didn't actually measure the amount of skin that was showing. They just applied arbitrary percentages, like that bare arms were worth 10 percent each and shoulders 5 percent. Do two shoulders equal one arm? I have no idea, and neither, I suspect, did the researchers.

- Correlation is not causation. Even if it were true that women showing 40 percent skin get approached more, it wouldn't necessarily follow that these women got approached more because they showed the right amount of skin. Maybe attractive women who get approached by a lot of men tend to be more comfortable with wearing revealing clothing at nightclubs. That makes just as much sense, if not more.

- And so on . . .

Sadly, such nonsense is routine. Another study purported to reveal how to tell if a woman has recently had an orgasm by how she walks.²⁰ Leaving aside the practical utility of this knowledge or lack thereof (though I suppose it would make for one heck of a party trick), what struck me about this study was that it included only sixteen Belgian university students as its test subjects. I'm no statistician, but I don't think you can make many generalizations about women from a sample size of sixteen—especially sixteen women who presumably have similar ages and backgrounds.

It goes on and on. Most studies seem to involve college

20. A. Nicholas et al., "A Woman's History of Vaginal Orgasm is Discernible from Her Walk," *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 5, no. 9 (September 2008).

students as subjects. That makes sense from a researcher's point of view, since he or she is likely a professor and has easy access to students, who in turn tend to have free time and can often use the stipend that these studies provide. But unless you date college students exclusively, the value of some of these studies will be limited. People change as they get older—our priorities, our lifestyles, even how our brains work—and while I'm sure you know men in their thirties and forties who don't *seem* like they've changed or evolved since they were twenty, these probably aren't the men you're interested in dating.

In fairness, the scientific community is not responsible for all the misinformation produced in its name. Often journalists are at fault for exaggerating or misinterpreting researchers' conclusions. But still—take anything you learn from a scientific study about dating and attraction with a grain of salt.

Chapter Four

What Men Want, and Why

So far, we've been taking an "outside in" approach, looking at male dating strategies and what we can learn from them. And in part II, which is coming right up, we'll focus on how to use this information to get the relationships you want. But before we get there, we have one last piece of information to cover: What do men want? And why?

Being a professional dating coach or pickup artist is sometimes a lot like being a bartender, therapist, or hairdresser. Clients tell me *everything*. Often, I'm the first or only person with whom these men share their true feelings about dating and relationships. Of course, we've already talked about how what people *say* or even *think* they want is not necessarily what they actually *do*.¹ However, I'm not only the person whom thousands of men consult on their dating life; I'm also often right there when they are actually acting on this information and making dating and relationship decisions. I'm at the restaurant, bar, or nightclub with them. I'm watching

1. As we've already covered, the gap between "what you say" and "what you do" is generally smaller for men than for women, because women usually face more social pressure to conform and more judgment about their sex and dating decisions. But it's still there.

them out of the corner of my eye at the coffee shop, mall, or park. I'm doing follow-up consultations after their programs. I started Love Systems with the idea that I might one day end up as an expert on women. I was startled to realize that the process would also make me an expert on men. Now I'm going to share some of this information with you about what men really want in a woman—in terms of both looks and personality.

APPEARANCE

It may not be politically correct, but the reality is that most men need to be physically attracted to a woman before they can contemplate being involved with her. If you think that this is superficial, unfair, or even fundamentally destructive to the long-term happiness of many men, I wouldn't necessarily disagree with you. But my job isn't to create a fantasy world; it's to give you the best road map I can through the one that exists.

You're probably not surprised to hear that looks are important to most men. But what might surprise you is *how* men interpret a woman's attractiveness. It's not like a thermometer, where every degree matters equally; it's more like qualifications for a job, where there are important minimum criteria and where exceeding them eventually brings diminishing returns. If a position requires a college degree and you don't have one, then those who do will have a huge advantage over you. But if you have a PhD, you might have some advantage over the people with just a bachelor's degree, but it's not nearly as big as the advantage those people have over the people with no degree at all. Regardless, even if you do meet or exceed the criteria, that doesn't get you a job offer. It gets you an

interview.² Your looks can get you in the door, but it's your personality that will seal the deal.

Gender Wars: Looks vs. Money

Another analogy to how men think of your appearance can be found in how women think about a man's bank account. Both looks (for a woman) and wealth (for a man) are attributes that have attracted the opposite sex—or even the same sex—since before the human race began. There are a lot of similarities in terms of how they work in the dating game.

IF IT'S LACKING...

If you're like most women, you're not a gold digger. But at the same time, you're probably not dying to date a man who lives on friends' spare couches, takes the bus to meet you, and needs you to pay for everything. You're probably not eager to deal with your friends' pity or questions. You may wonder what this imaginary man's lifestyle says about his choices, ambition, stability, and self-respect, to say nothing of his potential ability to make a consistent contribution to a family.

Your feelings here are a decent proxy for how most men feel about women to whom they are not physically attracted. It's not an impossible barrier, but it does put pressure on you to make the most of everything else you have. Just like Mr. Couch Surfer, Ms. Not Attractive should be charming, interesting, and irresistible in other ways.

2. Don't take this analogy as being for the dating process in general; typically, it's the man who plays the job-seeker role and the woman who acts as gatekeeper. And anyway, a good job interview (or pickup) should be about *both* people deciding if there's a good fit.

THE THRESHOLD

Now there's a level of wealth at which a man can take care of himself. He has a job. He can afford a night out. He doesn't have to borrow money all the time. He can afford a car if he wants one, and if he has one, it's not in obvious need of repair. Most women would be satisfied with a man with this level of wealth. It wouldn't necessarily be a factor in his favor, but it's not going to hold him back most of the time, either. Many women can be put in a similar category when it comes to their looks: a factor that sets you apart in neither a good nor a bad way.

A POSITIVE

Even without being a gold digger, it's very natural for a woman to appreciate a man with the ambition, intelligence, and drive to achieve success for himself. Such a man can probably do more to take care of his mind and body, has access to more varied and interesting experiences, and so on. Even if she's not attracted to the money itself (it's hard to lust after a number on a bank statement), it's normal for a woman to feel more attracted to such men. However, for most women, his wealth alone would not be a reason in itself to date him. You might give him more of a chance than you would Mr. Couch Surfer, but if that's all he has going for him, he may as well sleep on a friend's couch—he's going to be sleeping alone, anyway.

With an above-average appearance you'll get a second look from most men, and most will give you every opportunity to show them how amazing you are. But that's not going to get you a high-quality relationship by itself any more than a successful man can wave his investment portfolio in your face and have you fall in love with him. The type of person who will fall in love with a man's wallet or a woman's body to the

exclusion of all other factors doesn't tend to make for a great life partner.

DIMINISHING RETURNS

There comes a point when a bit more weight in a man's bank account or slightly more perfection in a woman's appearance doesn't make as much of a difference. There are diminishing returns. Your life isn't going to be that much different with a man who has nine cars instead of three, or a man who flies on his own private jet versus a man who travels first class anywhere he wants on commercial planes. Perhaps at a certain level of wealth, his lifestyle might even become a bit foreign and intimidating.

It works the same with women's looks in a man's mind. There's a level of attractiveness where a man asks himself: "Based on her looks alone, would I be proud to be seen with her?" Anything above that has seriously diminishing returns. And while a man might give a stunningly beautiful woman a lot more time than an unattractive one, looks alone are rarely enough to get a man into a romantic relationship. (Though they'll probably get you a friend with benefits anytime you want.)

IN SUM

The bottom line is that your looks are very important—but they are a ticket to play, not a ticket to win. And once you have that ticket to play is where your personality and flirting skills come in.

And by the way, don't let anyone call you a gold digger or superficial for being interested in a man's lifestyle. It's no less superficial for a man to be interested in the size of your breasts than it is for you to be interested in the size of his bank account—especially if it's one factor among many.

Men and women see beauty differently. What might make your girlfriends applaud might not get a second glance from men, and vice versa. As we get into the specifics of your fashion and style, we'll cover how some of these differences play out and what men actually respond to. But to further complicate matters, what a man values in your appearance also depends on what kind of relationship he is seeking. If he's looking for something long-term and committed, your face will have more importance. This makes sense from an evolutionary standpoint, because your face provides the best cues to your personality and it's easier to interpret emotions and facial expressions on an attractive, familiar face. If he's looking for something more short-term and immediately sexual, then your body will have more importance. This also makes sense in terms of our biology, since your body provides the best cues as to your reproductive fitness. I've seen this behavior over and over from Love Systems clients, so it was nice to see a scientific study come out recently that confirmed my observations.³

Of course, as we talked about in chapter 1, most men aren't *only* looking for a long-term relationship or *only* looking for a sexual encounter. Most men are open to either possibility, depending on his mood or other circumstances as well as on the qualities of the woman he's talking to. But within a few minutes of meeting you, a man will know what kind of relationship he wants with you, if any. Phrases like, "I don't want to screw this up; she's long-term material" or "I'm not going to be happy unless I bring her home tonight" are not uncommon on Love Systems bootcamps. (And by the way, those aren't

3. Jaime C. Confer, Carin Perilloux, and David M. Buss, "More Than Just a Pretty Face: Men's Priority Shifts toward Bodily Attractiveness in Short-Term versus Long-Term Mating Contexts," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 31, no. 5 (September 2010).

necessarily contradictory statements. It's a myth that a man won't date a woman he sleeps with right away. But that's for chapter 9.) The message here is that you can influence this process a bit depending on the features you emphasize.

Face

How people *talk* about a woman's facial beauty is not how people *see* beauty. You might hear a woman described as having beautiful, expressive eyes or lips that have a distinctive size and shape, but in most cases that's just rationalization. We see a face that pleases us and then we look for reasons to explain why we like it.

It's been proven over and over again that what makes a woman's face attractive to a man is *averageness*, *symmetry*, and *femininity*. Men don't generally think they're looking for these qualities, but they respond to them every day.

Averageness means that the most attractive women in pictures are composite (averaged) pictures of other women. If you were to pick a random group of ten women, it's virtually guaranteed that most people will find the "average" of their faces to be more attractive than that of any individual woman. Like all such counterintuitive preferences, this one comes from evolution and biology. Humans are reluctant to mate with people with genetic mutations (if a face is too different from theirs), whereas a familiar-looking face is comforting and its expressions are easier for us to interpret.

Symmetry also plays an important role. The left side of the face (and body, for that matter) should be identical to the right side. Just like averageness, facial symmetry isn't a quality that men knowingly look for in a woman, even if they respond

to it strongly. Symmetrical faces usually imply good genes. Humans grow by splitting cells; if that process works properly, the new cells should be exact copies of the original. If that process does not work properly, it creates a genetic mutation, which often leads to asymmetric features. Not all mutations are bad—mutations are what drive evolution—but most are, and we've learned to treat them with caution. Symmetry also shows that we've survived life so far pretty well and have avoided many diseases or injury.⁴

Femininity is a little more straightforward. Men tend to value typically feminine facial features such as a smaller nose, a smaller jaw, and a pointed chin. The existence of these features correlates with estrogen production, which is important to childbirth.

There's not that much you can do to make your face appear more average, feminine, or symmetrical, except for applying makeup. I'm hardly a makeup expert, but various studies tell us that most men find most women more attractive when they're wearing full eye makeup and foundation. You should also emphasize the contrast between the darkness of the eyes and lips and the brightness of the surrounding skin. Lipstick doesn't seem to have the same universal effect; some men like it and some don't.⁵

If you're determined to wring every possible advantage out of your facial appearance, there's one more step you can take. If you like men with blue eyes, wear blue contacts. Men with blue eyes are ever so slightly predisposed to prefer women who themselves have blue eyes. (Men with brown eyes won't—as a

4. W. M. Brown et al., "Dance Reveals Symmetry Especially in Young Men," *Nature* 438, no. 7071 (December 22, 2005).

5. Cathy Holding, "The Science of Magnetism," *Independent*, September 12, 2008.

group—care what color eyes you have, though of course individual men have their own preferences).⁶

Hair

Seriously, grow it long.

I don't care what your best friend, your mother, or your hairdresser says; I'm tired of arguing about this. It's only a slight exaggeration to say that I've yet to find *any* man who prefers a woman with short hair. Some women do look good with short hair, but they invariably look *better* with longer hair. Biologically, long hair suggests youth and health. Culturally, it suggests femininity. If you've been paying attention thus far, you know that maximizing the visual impact of youth, health, and femininity is a pretty good bet in attracting a man.

I'll make two exceptions to this rule. One is if you are part of a subculture, or, more accurately, exclusively interested in men from a particular subculture, where the norm is for women to have shorter hair. (I'm thinking "punk rock" here, not "women in my office cut their hair shorter as they get older.") The other is a golden rule we'll talk more about in the next chapter when we discuss fashion: do whatever you have to do to feel great about yourself first. If you feel at your sexiest and most attractive in short hair, then go ahead and book that salon appointment. That's ultimately what is going to matter the most.

6. The reason for this difference is pretty interesting. Two blue-eyed parents will produce blue-eyed children. If either or both parents have brown eyes, their children could legitimately have either blue or brown eyes. Thus, a blue-eyed man slightly reduces the risk that he'll be unknowingly investing in another man's children by preferring blue-eyed women. See Bruno Laeng, Ronny Mathisen, and Jan-Are Johnsen, "Why Do Blue-Eyed Men Prefer Women with the Same Eye Color?" *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 61, no. 3 (January 2007).

As for hair color, I get asked by a lot of women whether they should dye their hair—in particular, whether they should dye their hair blonde. Do blondes have more fun? People have been trying to answer this question one way or another since Charles Darwin wondered in the mid-nineteenth century whether blonde hair is a sexually-selected characteristic for women. He didn't find enough evidence to back up this theory, but he was on the right path; there are slight evolutionary advantages to having blonde hair.⁷ However, these are minor, and their effect on men's dating choices is fairly small. For every man who prefers blondes there's another who prefers brunettes. Average it out, and blondes come out only slightly ahead. Much more important is that your hair color complements your look and makes you feel great about yourself.

Body Type

You already knew some of the basics here before you even opened this book: men like breasts and curves. Scientific research suggests that most men prefer a waist-to-hips ratio of between 0.7 and 1.2. That means that for a woman with 36-inch hips, her waist could be anywhere between 25 and 43 inches. That range seems overly large and forgiving; I don't know too many men who would think of a 43-inch waist the same way they would think of a 25-inch one. *Playboy* models and Miss America contestants tend to be at a ratio of 0.7 or

7. Keeping blonde hair into adulthood is correlated with fitness and reproductive health. Caucasian blondes usually produce more estrogen (and less testosterone) than brunettes. Karl Grammer et al., "Darwinian Aesthetics: Sexual Selection and the Biology of Beauty," *Biological Reviews* 78, no. 3 (August 2003).

even lower.⁸ But that's overkill or impossible for most women. A good rule is just to keep your waist smaller than your hips.

There are good biological reasons for men to respond to women who fit this profile. Wide hips help in childbirth. A thinner waist, but not so thin that it suggests malnourishment, advertises that a woman is not already pregnant.⁹ (Isn't there an amazing amount of men's biology and sexual behavior focused around making sure that all of his children really are *his* children?) Of course, what men prefer in a woman's body type varies somewhat across cultures and over time. For example, Western society valued thinner women at the beginning and end of the twentieth century, while in the intervening years it seemed to value curvier (but still obviously-not-pregnant) women. However, most of these variations are firmly within the biologically desirable range of 0.7 to 1.2.

That said, one thing I've definitely noticed in the field is that a woman twenty pounds overweight who is confident, fun, and comfortable in her own skin is usually a lot more attractive to most men than a woman of average weight who doesn't have this kind of personality. This contradiction never seems to be covered in the scientific studies, which typically feature men being given a bunch of pictures of different women and asked to rate their attractiveness.

Also remember there is nearly infinite diversity out there. No matter what your appearance, you *are* some man's ideal type.

8. Steven M. Platek and Devendra Singh, "Optimal Waist-to-Hip Ratios in Women Activate Neural Reward Centers in Men," published on *PloS ONE* 5, no. 2, (February 5, 2010).

9. Frank Marlowe and Adam Wetsman, "Preferred Waist-to-Hip Ratio and Ecology," *Personality and Individual Differences* 30, no. 3 (February 2001).

PERSONALITY

Your personality always matters to a man, but it matters much more if he is looking for dates or a relationship than if he wants a casual hookup. If you're looking for something primarily physical, be fun, outgoing, flirtatious, and unafraid to talk about sex. For a longer-term connection, there is even more diversity in terms of what a man likes in a woman's personality than in her looks; however, there *are* a few personality traits that consistently attract most men.

Be Positive

Men respond to a woman's emotional energy. Negativity is deeply unattractive, whether in a first meeting or (especially) on a date where the man is at least in theory taking you out and trying to show you a good time.

"I get that she didn't like Thai food," Edward, the former paratrooper, said to me after his first and only date with Amanda, whom he'd met at his bootcamp. "But she should have said something about it when we got to the restaurant so we could have gone somewhere else, or at least found *something* about the place to enjoy—the tea, the décor, the typos on the menus, anything. I was planning to take her to a bistro/dessert place afterward so she could get something she liked, but she was so switched off at dinner that I decided not to bother. Not everything is going to go your way in a relationship, and if you can't let something like that go when you're on a first date and supposedly trying to make the best possible impression

on the other person, then you're probably even more high-maintenance once you're coupled up. No thanks."

Emotions are, almost literally, contagious.¹⁰ Try to put yourself into whatever emotional state you want him to associate with being around you.

Be Independent

I can't say this enough: no matter how much you like a man, keep and develop your own opinions, your own friends, your own interests, and your own life. He will value you more for it.

You probably wouldn't think it would be very attractive if a man gave up his goals, hobbies, and beliefs to be part of your life—or *be* your life—and become joined to your hip. It's similarly unattractive in reverse.

We'll get into this dynamic in detail in chapter 11, when we talk more about relationships, but for now remember the rule that perception is reality. If a man *feels* smothered, then he is; it does you no good to argue that he isn't. You may be right in thinking that he's being ridiculous or that his threshold for feeling smothered is absurdly low, but you can't argue someone out of how they feel. I can't count how many female clients I've had who were upset that their former partners felt that they were too clingy and proceeded to break down for me in excruciating detail why this perception was wrong. It doesn't matter. No judge is going to get up and say, yes, Ms. Girlfriend, you have proven your case and therefore I rule that Mr.

10. The science here gets a bit complex; look up "mirror neurons" for a description of how this concept works.

Boyfriend will no longer feel smothered. The only sure way for a man who feels suffocated *not* to feel that way anymore is for his perception of your behavior to change—and not in a way that *you* feel isn't suffocating but in a way that *he* actually feels comfortable with.¹¹ (Or you can drop him and move on. Many men confuse commitmentphobia with suffocation. Regardless, you're not going to argue him out of his feelings.)

Be financially independent, too. Many men are paranoid about gold diggers—even men who have never met such a woman in their life. (You can thank the media for that one.) And just like you probably value a man who can take care of himself and has his life together, most men appreciate that in a woman, too.

Make Him Look Good and Feel Good about Himself

We can subtitle this section “The Fragile Male Ego.” Many women seem to understand this one in theory, but think it means doing “big” things like hosting a great party or cooking up homemade Super Bowl snacks. But much more important is the cumulative weight of the day-to-day. When at all possible, don't criticize him when others are around; always wait to talk about sensitive subjects in private. Try to look your best when you're going to be seen out with him. Never, ever, flirt with his friends or in front of his friends. (In case you're wondering, saying that you're “a natural flirt” or you “don't mean anything by it” doesn't make it okay.)

11. Alternatively, think of the process in reverse and remember the last time you felt that a potential romantic interest was boring, insensitive, distant, or any other quality you found unattractive. Would his arguing with you or disagreeing with you have changed your mind?

Also, many men are deeply insecure about their sexuality. As a wise friend of mine once put it: “A man doesn’t leave a woman to be with a woman who’s better in bed—a man leaves a woman to be with a woman who thinks *he’s* better in bed.” Additionally, and in contrast to many women, most men don’t generally want to be with women who they know have had high-status relationships in the past. Because men have a thing about conquest and self-image, they tend not to like hearing about the actor, CEO, or local big shot you used to sleep with.

Be Feminine

Most men don’t want you to be “one of the guys.” He’ll appreciate that you can hang with him and his buddies without looking like you want to kill yourself, but he doesn’t want you to act like a man, and it doesn’t really impress him that you have a lot of male friends. In fact, it probably makes him wonder why other women don’t value your friendship.

Feminine doesn’t mean frilly, pink, or subservient. It means that you bring your unique energy to his life. Every woman expresses her femininity differently. Some women are domestic goddesses and can make a beautiful home or cook a delicious meal. Some women bring class and empathy to even the most hard-driving tasks and jobs. And some women love to dress up and always look and smell great. These may even be the same women, as these personality traits are not mutually exclusive. You don’t have to make traditionally feminine qualities central to your identity—this isn’t the 1950s—but don’t be afraid to express yourself as a woman in a way that is true to who you are.

Manage Jealousy and Know Your Relationship Status

Jealousy is an unattractive and profoundly weak emotion. It's fine to show a little jealousy—just enough so that he knows you care—but never so much that you come across as controlling or powerless. On the other hand, demanding respect is not the same thing as being jealous. Even before a commitment is made, you have every right to think it's disrespectful for him to talk about other women or flirt with other women when you're around. (You also have every right *not* to be bothered by this. Some women enjoy watching their man flirt as long as he comes home to you. Set boundaries that are right for *you*.)

Jealousy often comes from mismatched expectations. If you're in a relationship with a man who has made a clear and explicit commitment to you and he's breaking that promise, then this is an issue that needs to be addressed. (We'll go into how to do so in chapter 11.) But notice the words *clear* and *explicit*. You absolutely cannot assume a relationship; it must be discussed and it is never implied. Meeting his parents doesn't automatically create a monogamous relationship. Neither does spending four weekends with him in a row. The only way to have the justified expectation of a committed, monogamous relationship is to have a clear and explicit conversation about it. (We will cover this subject in detail in chapter 10.)

Why do so many people fail to clarify their expectations with their partner? For at least three reasons. First, it's natural to assume that others think the way you do. If a situation looks and feels like a monogamous relationship to you, it's easy to presume that he sees it the same way. Second, wishful thinking can lead you astray. In the absence of clear and explicit signals from a man, it can be tempting to assume that he feels the

way you want him to. (We teach men to avoid this hazard by being open about their intentions.) Finally, clear and explicit romantic conversations can be awkward or uncomfortable. In particular, many women know that men often complain about potential partners who constantly want to talk about “us” or “the relationship,” and thus shy away from such conversations. But having such a discussion once in a while or when necessary is not the same thing as doing so constantly. Besides, any man who can’t have a single conversation with you about the parameters of your relationship isn’t someone you should be making long-term plans with, anyway.

It amazes me how even socially savvy women can mess this one up. A couple of years ago, I inadvertently ignited a bit of an online firestorm by taking issue with a relationship columnist who let her own assumptions get away from her. She met a man at her gym who seemed to be amazing and everything she wanted. She went on a date with him. They had a great time. A few days later, she was shocked and upset that she came across his (active) profile on an Internet dating site. I’m sure that if someone had written asking her advice on that situation, she would have told them that they were probably projecting—that they were imagining themselves in a relationship with this great guy and confusing those feelings with reality. But we often lose perspective when it comes to our own actions.

And What Doesn’t Matter (Even If Everyone Says It Does)...

One quality that doesn’t really matter as people think it does is how good you are in bed. I’ve seldom heard a man base a relationship decision on the quality of sex (quantity is another story). If your relationship is primarily sexual, like

a friends-with-benefits situation, then of course quality will matter more. But I've never heard a man say, "I'd really like Sandra to be my girlfriend, but she's not that good in bed."

Speaking personally, I can say that the "performance range" among women is actually pretty narrow—much more narrow than how women describe this range among men. So much more goes into a sexual encounter than raw physical skill, and what one person might find pleasing another person might hate anyway. If a man is attracted to you, he probably assumes that the sex in a long-term relationship will be fine if it's not already. If he's like most men, he's too worried about his own performance to be much concerned with yours.

That said, enthusiasm is different from technical skill. Any woman can and should be enthusiastic, and this quality *does* matter a great deal to men. Also, avoid being a prude or being judgmental. Most men don't mind a "No, I'm not into that" or "That doesn't do anything for me," but few men really want to hear *why* you think something that he likes is gross or disgusting. If his preferences in bed horrify you so much that they affect how you see him as a person, then break up with him if you have to, but otherwise don't make it an issue. Sex is kind of awkward to begin with—don't make it more complicated than it needs to be.

In Sum...

While every man is different, most men are not especially complicated. It's a cliché, but often the reason a woman feels confused by a man's behavior is that she is trying to ascribe more meaning, subtlety, and nuance to it than was intended. If you already have a conclusion in mind (for example, "There's more going on than what he's telling me") then the human

brain is predisposed to look for evidence to support it—even if it's just random noise. So let's keep things simple.

In part II, we're going to get into the hardcore dos and don'ts for getting the love and the relationships you want. But if you've borrowed this book from a friend and have to return it before you can read on, take this away: if you make the most of your appearance, and the man (or men) of your dreams thinks you're into him, a responsible adult, not a drama chaser, and genuinely interesting, then the odds will be on your side.

Part II



Chapter Five

Getting Ready (And How to Stack the Odds in Your Favor)

In part I, we talked about why today's dating world works the way it does. Now it's time to use this information to start taking action. The only person who can get you the love and the relationships you deserve is you. But before we begin, a warning: there is no secret magic bullet that will have the man (or men) of your dreams falling at your feet. We live in a culture of instant gratification, and in my opinion many women's magazines do a disservice with every cover that pretends to reveal "the three secrets to attract any man" or "the hidden trick to *guarantee* a second date." Great marketing, maybe, but about as useful and realistic as a leprechaun with a treasure map. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Female clients who have significantly improved their dating lives have done so by making a bunch of little changes, not by learning One Big Secret. Incidentally, the same principle applies to men.¹ The myths are different (for example,

1. When I wrote a dating advice book for men, it was called the *Magic Bullets Handbook*, which is an ironic title that made fun of the idea that there was a simple one-size-fits-all cure for dating issues.

some men quest for the perfect pickup line—as if a few clever words to start a conversation could work as a love spell that would make Harry Potter proud), but the desire for a quick fix is universal—and ultimately futile.

In the next few chapters, we'll discuss these little things that you can do to tilt the odds in your favor. We'll walk step-by-step through the romantic process from before you've even left the house through the first meeting and the first date and ultimately into a relationship. But first things first—think of this chapter as getting ready for a night out. There are no men around yet. Just three critical questions: Where are you off to? What are you going to wear? And who's coming with you?

WHERE TO GO?

Whether meeting men is at the top of your agenda or just a nice possibility while you're out, give some thought to the kind of men you like and what they do with their time. If you like outdoorsy work-with-your-hands kind of men, you're more likely to find them on a trail or at a beach cleanup than at a book club. If you're looking for someone wealthy and career focused, you might find him at a charity benefit. And so on.

This advice may sound obvious, but few people really think this way. Poll your girlfriends on what kind of men they like or are looking for, then look at how they spend their time socially. Are they putting themselves anywhere where the men they like can easily find them?

Of course, a balance is necessary. There's no point going to places you hate just to meet men. As we've covered, emotions are contagious. If you're having fun, he's more likely to have

fun being with you. But if you feel anxious or unhappy, he's more likely to feel the same way and to associate those emotions with spending time with you. You can try to act like you're enjoying yourself (and there's nothing like attention and interest from an attractive member of the opposite sex to turn "I hate this place" into "Let's not leave just yet"), but if you're having to fake your happiness too often, then you're simply going to the wrong places.

When I first met Stephen on his bootcamp, he told me about a relationship he'd had with a woman named Kristen, whom he'd first met at the local college bar when he was a student. He ran into her there a few more times in the following weeks, and they eventually exchanged phone numbers and started dating. As soon as they officially became a couple, she started complaining every time Stephen went out drinking with his friends, even though she was always invited. They broke up soon after these arguments began—and then Kristen started going out to meet men at the same bar again.

Stephen's story reminded me of the old vaudeville routine, where one performer comes out onstage and interrupts whatever act is going on to look for something he says he's recently lost (usually his glasses). The other onstage performers, pretending to be annoyed by the intrusion, ask him where he lost them. "Backstage," comes the answer. Well, why is he slowing down the act out here when he lost his glasses somewhere else? "Because the light is better out here." Don't be that guy. Don't be Kristen. Don't go where it's easy to meet men. Go where you can meet men you *like*.

Diversify your social life so you are always coming into contact with new people. One of the gems I remind female friends and clients about is happy hour. The men you meet

there are likely to have jobs. It's social and fun (and great for nonromantic networking, too) without your having to invest your whole night or deal with drunks, crowds, or deafening music. They tend to have a favorable (for you) male-female ratio—and where else are you meeting men at 5:30 p.m. on a weekday, anyway?

Themed events can be great—anything from the opening of a new art gallery exhibition to concerts to volunteer activities to night classes to '80s Night at the local dive bar—because, in theory, you are guaranteed to have at least one thing in common with the men you meet. It's easier for men to approach you at these events, too, because they can automatically talk about something related to the theme of the event to break the ice. Win-win.

You can also take activities you're already doing and make them more social. If you normally work out in front of a DVD at home, maybe it's time to sign up for a class at the gym. Feeling like reading a book on a Saturday afternoon? Bring it to the park. Got some work to catch up on? Take your laptop to the coffee shop. Men can't meet you on your couch... unless you're dating online (for online dating tips, see box on pages 114–21).

Finally, if you're the kind of person who needs to warm up socially before you're ready to be your most amazing self in a social environment, then make sure you actually do warm up. Don't be the person who makes a shy entrance and then slinks around for an hour before opening up and having fun. Instead, plan your night so you stop at a friend's place, bar, or lounge along the way, and warm up until you feel happy, talkative, and approachable. There's a reason why people put such importance on first impressions.

HOW TO DRESS (OR: SIX FASHION RULES FROM A MAN WHO KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT FASHION)

I'm not a fashion expert. I don't know (or care) what's in and what's out, and I can't tell a Prada from a Payless. Neither can most men. Which brings us right away to:

FASHION RULE #1: When dressing to meet men, make the most of your figure instead of showing off a brand, an outfit, or a look.

Most straight men don't know enough to care about women's fashion. If you go to the trouble of pointing out how your shoes match your handbag and scarf, we'll be polite and say something to sound impressed, but it doesn't really impact us. And if Marilyn Monroe wore something like it once, we'll at most make polite noises about that, too, unless you look as good as she did in it. And in *that* case, it doesn't matter whether your muse was Marilyn Monroe or Marilyn Manson; we'll like it.

Brands don't matter much, either. If Dolce & Gabbana makes the most of your figure, that's great. If it doesn't, the label isn't going to make anyone look twice on their way to talk to the woman beside you who is rocking secondhand jeans that fit amazingly—even if what she's wearing went out of style a few years ago. By the way, this is just as true for the fifty-five-year-old doctor as it is for the twenty-year-old student.

I had a friend in college who really could have benefited from this understanding. When we invited her out somewhere, she'd invariably show up late, stressed, and dressed in a fabulous outfit that an art director would love but no

straight male would ever notice at night. She actually got *less* attention from the men because she wasn't relaxed and having fun—half the time her dress or shoes were too tight or otherwise uncomfortable. Of course, most of the time you're not dressing only to meet men. But when men are on your agenda, don't overthink your outfit. Just wear what's most flattering.

FASHION RULE #2: If you are pretty, dress to look pretty. If you're average, dress to look interesting.

Men do not always gravitate to the most attractive woman in the room. While some shy away because they're nervous or intimidated or feel unworthy, others do so out of choice; they see women who are more interesting to them. A cute hat or a waist corset belt or some shiny shoes can liven up an outfit if you're hitting the town and express your originality and flair. Let what you wear tell a story about who you are. A woman dressed for a workout might get more attention at the park from an active man who values fitness than her slightly-more-attractive friend who just looks generally cute. Depending on who you are and what kind of men you want, you can cultivate any sort of look (artsy? professional? alternative?) that expresses who you are to the men who want to meet a woman like you. Put your outfit together with broad strokes. Most men won't notice anything too subtle or understated.

You can also make the most out of your look by wearing clothes that carry positive associations for men. While doing so probably won't make a major difference in itself, sometimes every little advantage counts.

- **Heels.** Associated with femininity and sexiness. They also make your legs look great and make you stand up straight, which accentuates your butt and your breasts. But make sure

you can walk in them; there's nothing more annoying for a man than moving ten feet per minute because he's dragging someone along who didn't realize she can't walk in five-inch heels.

- **Red.** Our brains associate red with sexuality. Female baboons and chimpanzees redden before ovulation, following a genetic mutation about 23 million years ago.² Both science and my observations say that wearing red will make the average man find you sexier.

- **Soft Fabrics.** It's probably not worth constructing an outfit simply to wear soft fabrics, but given the choice between two equally attractive pieces of clothing, choose the softer one. Feeling soft and gentle to the touch can make you seem more feminine and desirable.

FASHION RULE #3: Give men a hook to approach you.

We've already mentioned that it's not easy for most men to approach a woman who he doesn't know, break the ice, and start a romantic/flirtatious conversation with her. He may be a great guy, but if he can't quickly engage you in a conversation from a standing start, he doesn't have a chance.

So help him out. Wear something that gives him an excuse to start talking to you. It doesn't have to be anything dramatic; an unusual purse or hat or shoes can be enough for a man to give you a compliment or ask you a question. Since no straight man on the planet cares enough about purses to walk across the room to comment on yours, it means he's curious about you.

2. Andrew Elliot and Daniela Niesta, "Romantic Red: Red Enhances Men's Attraction to Women," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 5 (November 2008).

This technique also works with anything you can wear or carry with you that has a story behind it. Remember Jesse, the shy student from chapter 1 who had never had a girlfriend or a second date at the age of twenty-four? He met his wife, Linda, a few months after his bootcamp, when she was wearing a jacket with something written in German on it. That was enough of a hook for him to ask her whether she'd recently been to Germany, which led to a conversation about travel, which led to them discovering other interests they had in common, which ultimately led to a great romance. Try this as an experiment: Go to a big, trendy coffee shop by yourself for a couple of hours. Then go back the next week, but bring along a travel guide to Greece or a sketchpad or a stack of postcards. Nine times out of ten, you'll meet more men when you've given them an easy way to break the ice.

Don't think that it's only the shy guys who are more likely to meet you if you make it easier for them. When it comes to approaching women, the most confident men I know are my fellow Love Systems instructors, but even they will take advantage of an easier path, if offered. They'll approach the ice queen in the corner, sure, but if her equally attractive friend has made it easier for them to break the ice, then they'll usually start with her first.

Of course, the easier you are to approach, the more random guys you'll meet. So leave your conversation pieces at home when you want to be left alone or when you want to set the bar a bit higher.

FASHION RULE #4: Dress to make yourself feel confident, sexy, and comfortable.

How you dress affects how you feel. Physically, it can be hard to be your naturally fun, happy, and fascinating self

when you're wincing in too-tight shoes. Psychologically, what you wear can have an even greater effect.

There's a reason the military insists on uniforms and has a million regulations about how they are to be worn. They want soldiers to eschew individuality, follow instructions to the letter, and show attention to detail, so they insist on a dress code that emphasizes these qualities. Think of the last time you took off your sweatpants and put on a business suit. You probably felt more powerful, more confident, and more professional—not because of how others reacted to you but because of how you felt inside. Many women say they feel sexier when wearing lingerie, even though in theory it can't be seen by anyone else. If you *feel* more attractive, you will *be* more attractive.

For many women, a conversation about feeling attractive and sexy (or one about feeling comfortable in your outfit) inevitably touches on the subject of skin. How revealingly should you dress? If you're hitting the town at night, how much skin should you show?

The obvious answer: dress appropriately for where you're going, who you're with, and your age and body type. A woman in her forties or fifties who dresses like she's in her twenties but isn't able to pull it off gives off a nearly palpable aura of desperation.

Beyond that, what most women worry about being too slutty or too prudish is actually just fine. Don't make putting an outfit together more complicated than it needs to be. Especially don't be like those "scientists" we were making fun of in chapter 3 who decided after a few hours at a nightclub that a woman should dress to show off exactly 40 percent of her body.

If in doubt, use the 15 percent rule. Think about where you're going and how other women there will be dressed. If you're standing in a random group with five other women, would your outfit stick out as being too revealing or too

conservative? If neither, don't worry about it. The human brain looks for patterns and exceptions and is extremely quick to adjust baseline or normal expectations. If yes to either, make sure your outfit suits your natural advantages, as well as the messages that you're trying to send about yourself; we'll cover this subject next.

What You Can Learn from Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu was a Chinese general who wrote *The Art of War* about 2,500 years ago. While the book focuses on military doctrine, its lessons have often been applied to business strategy, team sports, and political theory. But what can the Art of War teach us about the art of love?

Plenty, it turns out. Sun Tzu exhorted generals to choose their terrain wisely and to fight on the ground most favorable to their armies' unique strengths. Other generals might seek out the enemy for battle at the earliest opportunity, regardless of positioning; Sun Tzu was willing to set up on the terrain of his choosing and wait for the enemy to come to him.

If men usually find you sexually attractive, then by all means dress to express your sexuality. If you're not confident in your appearance, don't compete on the same terrain as women who are. Dress to make the most of what you have. A man's first impression of you should be "She seems confident and comfortable in her own skin," rather than "She's dressing to show off her body, but there are tons of other women doing that who look a lot better."

This principle goes far beyond looks and clothes. Let's say you're interested in a man from another culture. While it's polite and respectful to learn something about his

background, many women go overboard, losing their own identity in the process. That's competing on the wrong ground; if he wanted a woman who was immersed in his culture, he would date a woman from his culture.

If you're interested in a younger man, your biggest selling point shouldn't be how young looking, active, and up to date on popular culture you are. If he valued these qualities most, he'd date a younger woman. Don't be willfully ignorant or dismissive, either—doing so will just increase the distance between you two. Instead, show him what your life experience and maturity can bring to your relationship in a way that a younger woman couldn't compete with.

The same principles apply if he's older, or if you have different lifestyles, and so on.

FASHION RULE #5: Use to your advantage the assumptions that men will make about you from the way you dress.

I'm sorry to take your mom's side on this, but she's right. If you stand out for how revealingly you're dressed (see the 15 percent rule above), then all things being equal, men will tend to think of you more for fun and sex than for a serious relationship. You may dress a certain way because you're confident in yourself. Some men will respect that. Sadly, most won't. Some may even find you too intimidating to approach. For an average guy who hasn't been trained by Love Systems, a woman confidently walking around in a revealing top and miniskirt is simply not approachable. He may be dying to meet you, but unless he gets drunk he's not going to start a conversation.

But before you say I'm contradicting myself, let me explain. Where I disagree with your mom is whether standing out is necessarily a bad thing. Maybe you don't want to be bothered

by sweet, earnest men trying to have a deep conversation with you tonight while you dance with your friends. Or maybe you're in the mood to meet the smooth-talking alpha male who isn't afraid to approach you. Or maybe you just want to get laid tonight.

Now, don't take this (or any) fashion rule to an extreme. How much skin you show is just one factor among many. How you dress acts more like a filter—what *kind* of men will approach you—more than it influences their behavior once they do. Revisiting the job interview analogy from chapter 4: once you get an interview, your degrees and qualifications don't matter as much because the interview itself gives the interviewer much more relevant information about whether you'd be good for the job. Similarly, any assumptions that a man makes about you from the way you dress will quickly be replaced by what he observes from talking to you directly.

FASHION RULE #6: Relax.

Obviously, you want to look your best before you go out. But beyond a certain point, much of what women do to get ready is wasted and lost on most men, especially at night. Of course, you're not *only* dressing to attract men—but that's what we're focusing on here. The key is to spend just enough time getting ready to make you feel good about yourself and then cut it there; you're probably far more critical of your own appearance than most of the men you meet will be.

An hour of chilling out usually beats an extra hour of stress on your clothes, hair, and makeup. It's much more important to feel relaxed and happy and comfortable when you're meeting a guy than to get your hair exactly perfect, especially since it will probably get messed up once you get wherever you're going

anyway. When you have a choice between going the extra mile to tweak your appearance or catching up with some phone calls to friends before you head out, the latter is almost always the better choice. Your upbeat and social personality will take you a lot further with men than choosing the right belt.

WHO TO GO WITH?

If you're like most women, you probably thought that of the three categories I listed at the beginning of this chapter, "Who to go with" would be the least important in terms of meeting men. I would disagree; it can even be the most important.

Group Size

When we take men out on the first night of bootcamp and ask them who they want to approach first, it's almost always a woman standing alone or in a small group. When we ask them who they want to see an instructor pick up, they invariably pick a woman in the middle of a large group of people.

Clients instinctively know that starting a conversation with a woman by herself or with only one or two friends is much easier than starting a conversation with a woman in a large group. Few men have the skills or the confidence to be able to approach a group of a half-dozen women and hold everyone's attention long enough to make a connection with you.

If you want men to come talk to you, go out in groups of two or three, or split into smaller groups when you get where you're going. Three gives you the most flexibility, since your two friends can talk to each other if you're chatting with someone interesting.

Gender

Clients don't just want to observe instructors approaching women who are in large groups. What they really want to see is demonstration pickups of women in large groups *who are surrounded by lots of other men*. And they are often shocked to learn that if a man knows what he's doing, picking up a woman from a mixed-gender group is usually easier than picking her up from an all-female group.

We'll get further into why this is the case a bit later on, but one of the main reasons is that very few other men will be approaching you when you're in a mixed group. One guy with a group of four women isn't a big deal, but anything approaching parity will put other men off. Men who approach anyway face less competition and can usually count on a good reaction from women for having the guts to do what the competition can't. By the end of a bootcamp, most clients will prefer approaching mixed groups as well.

Thus, if there's a Love Systems bootcamp (or bootcamp alumni) where you're going, it won't matter if you bring all your guy friends. We're still going to come talk to you. But to meet other men, make it easier for them to approach you by grabbing a girlfriend from time to time and wandering away from your platonic male friends, relatives, coworkers, and friends' significant others.

Attractiveness

I've often been asked whether a woman should go out with plainer-looking friends so she stands out, or whether she should tag along with the hottest of her friends so she can

piggyback off of the attention they get. The answer depends on what you want out of your night.

If you're looking for fun and excitement, then go out in all-female groups with the most attractive friends you can—that is, attractive to men. It doesn't matter if *you* roll your eyes at her bleached-blond hair or the seemingly unnecessary extra wiggle when she walks.³ The more attractive your group, the more confident the men will be who approach you. These are the men who are connected to the best parties and know how to show you a great time. Don't worry about being overshadowed—no one invites half of a group of women anywhere. On the other hand, if you're looking for something more long-term, try to avoid being in a group where you are the least attractive woman; otherwise, when you meet a group of men, you're very likely to be talking to the married guy all night while his single friends hit on yours.

What if the opposite is true, and *you're* the most attractive woman in a group? Usually that means that you'll be talking to the leader or the most confident man in his group. But if men don't tend to be attracted to your friends at all, you'll get approached a lot less even if you happen to be attractive. Men tend to work together, so usually if a guy is chatting up a woman, his friend will make polite conversation with her friend even if he doesn't happen to be interested in her. But most guys won't do that all night. At some point someone is going to want to meet you, look at his friend, and then hear: "Nuh-uh. Next women we go up to, they both have to be hot."

3. Check her shoes. Marilyn Monroe used to cut down the heel on one of her shoes to emphasize the wiggle.

Personality

The best friends to be with when you want to meet men are happy, social, and fun—not judgmental, jealous, or gossipy. They should be on the same page as you when it comes to your goals—which brings us to the story of Edward the former paratrooper, and the first night of his first bootcamp. He'd just done his very first approach and was relieved to have survived, head still attached and not bitten off as he'd feared. He was excited to see what would happen next, and he started walking toward two attractive women by the edge of the dance floor. He stopped, planted his feet, and opened his mouth, when the blonde cut him off: "Keep walking," she said. Being new to Love Systems, he didn't really know how to react. He paused for a second, but as soon as he opened his mouth again, she said it again: "Keep walking." So he did.

Of course, we were going to use this moment as a teaching opportunity for the bootcamp. A little later, I asked a Love Systems instructor who goes by the name of Future Thompson to demonstrate how to deal with tough cases such as this.⁴ Thompson is among the funniest and most charming men I've ever met—I had the pleasure of teaching him as a client over seven years ago, and he's been continuing to perfect his skills ever since. The blonde tried to shut him down, too, so he teased her a bit, and even though she kept trying to cut him off, Thompson was just so darn funny that her brunette friend couldn't keep from laughing. Ice Queen Blonde *had* to lighten up or risk looking ridiculous in front of them both. That's when I sent Edward back to the group. I signaled for

4. Some older Love Systems instructors have silly nicknames (like "Future"), from back in the day when everything was run on Internet forums. His real name is Thompson.

Thompson to stay and “occupy” the blonde (whose body language had by that point done a 180—she was hanging on his every word) so that Edward and the brunette, the target of his initial interest, could get to know each other. He was shocked to hear that she was really glad he came back to talk to her. She explained that her friend always put up a front and pretended to resent it when men would “bother” them, so she had to act the same way. They later exchanged phone numbers and met up for a date.

Now, when you go out, there’s not always going to be a Love Systems instructor ready and waiting to deal with any judgmental or negative friends you have. Leave them at home if you can; it’s much better to go out with friends with whom you can be honest about what you’re looking for—whether it’s just talking with a cute guy if the situation arises or whether you’re on a mission to hook up tonight. Whatever your goals, it’s difficult to accomplish *anything* with a man when your friend is coming over every five minutes to ask if you’re okay, if you want to dance, or if you’re ready to leave yet. It’s even more difficult when you’re worrying about how she’s going to gossip about you the next day. The same rule applies to your male friends. It’s all well and good to have a trusted friend who can tell an overpersistent or overinebriated admirer to back off, but if he’s a frustrated suitor himself, you’re not likely to meet anyone else. Over and over again on bootcamps, I see clients abandon conversations with women because a platonic male hanger-on is just making the whole situation too annoying.

Sometimes a woman doesn’t even know when her friends are sabotaging her. On the second night of Peter’s bootcamp, things seemed to be going well with one woman until he suddenly came back to tell me that one of the men with her—a

large and physically imposing sort—had told him that he was her boyfriend. I didn't buy it (you can tell almost everything from body language) and instructed him to go straight back to her and say: "So-and-so said you guys are a couple . . . that's great." He hadn't even finished the sentence before the woman cut him off to say "we're not" and started glaring at her friend. Who knows how many other men he'd sabotaged? Just as there are plenty of fish in the sea for you, there are plenty of other women out there, too—including many who are just as interesting as you, but who don't have a needy friend acting as your self-appointed chaperone.

A final note on this subject: men don't usually care much about how you and your friends treat each other or how close you are with them. Women *do* seem to care about this—presumably because how a man treats his friends and how he is treated by them provides clues about his personality—and we spend a lot of time at bootcamps showing guys how to build each other's value up when they're meeting women. But you don't need to worry about any of that. If you have a couple of perfect "going out" friends whom you don't really like in any other context, that's fine with me.

Logistics

Let's say you're at a restaurant and meet a really interesting guy who wants you to stay for a couple of hours to enjoy some dessert and a glass of wine with him. You're having fun, he seems respectable, and you'd like to explore the possibilities. Now compare two logistical situations:

1. You are out with a friend who is very sweet but maybe a bit insecure. Tonight she is driving; she picked you up

on the way to the restaurant. She isn't getting attention from anyone and feels jealous of you. Now dinner's over and she wants to go home. You know that if you decline her ride, she's going to assume you went home with your new friend, and she's going to tell everyone she knows.

2. You are out with a friend who is very sweet but maybe a bit insecure. You both drove separately to meet at the restaurant (that's how you met this guy in the first place; you were a few minutes early and he came over to talk to you while you were waiting). You'd arranged to meet your friend for dinner, but also mentioned that a group of your college friends might be getting together later and you'd promised to drop by. Now dinner is over and your friend wants to go home. She thinks you're going to see your college friends, so you have as long as you want to get to know this new man—without anyone else getting in the way.

Obviously, logistics are especially important if you like to have fun and adventure with people you meet when you're out. Good logistics can lead to your having a passionate night whenever you want without your friends knowing about it, judging you, or preventing it from happening. But it's not just about hooking up. Sometimes you might want to spend a bit more time with someone interesting—to turn the interaction from “random twenty-minute conversation at the bar” to “meet at bar, share stories and jokes over ice cream next door, make plans for next week”—without interference.

To keep your logistics under your control, have your own, independent transportation whenever and wherever possible. If no one is expecting to drive you home and no one is expecting you to drive them home, then you have a lot of freedom

in how your night ends. You don't need to make a big deal to your friends; when they suggest plans, simply tell them that you're going to be in that area of town already, and you should meet there. Of course, if you live somewhere where people normally walk, use public transportation, or take taxis, then this particular logistical problem usually won't even come up.

In addition, you can divide up your night. If one group of friends is going to happy hour and another group is going dancing, plan to meet up with both. This tactic gives you a lot of flexibility if, say, you meet a great guy at happy hour and want to spend a bit of time with him. No one needs to know what you're up to in between saying good-bye to your happy-hour friends and arriving at the nightclub—or even why you were late or couldn't make it. In addition, splitting up your night nearly assures that you will, by necessity, have your own transportation.

Logistics matter most at night. If you usually meet men in the daytime or through friends, then you don't need to worry about them as much.

Chapter Six

Meet More Men. Meet Better Men.

You've done what you can do to stack the odds in your favor before walking out the door; now it's time to put that preparation to use, to meet more men and higher-quality men when you're out. Before we get started, note that this chapter assumes you're going somewhere such as a concert, restaurant, coffee shop, or nightclub where you don't know many people and where the men you meet will be strangers. (Chapter 7 applies these techniques to meeting men through friends, family, work, and so on.)

Meeting strangers can *always* play a role in your dating life. Presumably, you spend a decent amount of your time out in public, anyway; if there are interesting men to be met there, you may as well be in a position to take advantage of any opportunity. Social events where you don't know a lot of people can also be great for practice, for example, if you're not confident in your flirting skills or want to test out a new outfit somewhere where you won't be as embarrassed if it gets a bad reaction. Practicing in difficult situations can make everyday moments routine; if you're able to make a great entrance and first impression at a gallery opening with two hundred people, you'll do just fine walking into your sister-in-law's potluck.

Meeting strangers can help you broaden your social network. Maybe things have temporarily dried up, or maybe you're looking for someone or something that your current lifestyle can't really provide. If you seriously need to get laid this weekend, but everyone you know is deeply conservative, judgmental, and gossipy, then you're going to have to venture out there a little bit. And vice versa. So what do you do once you find yourself among strangers?

Online Dating—10 Steps for Success

Where else will you find strangers? The Internet. Online dating isn't for everyone, but it does have the advantage of putting you in contact with many men whom you might not otherwise meet. It's also one of the more flexible ways to meet men. You can send and receive messages at any time of day, and you don't even need to get dressed to go out. If you do want to give online dating a try, use these ten rules to get the most out of your experience:

1. *Use multiple sites.* Start by casting the net broadly. Sign up for a few big, general dating sites (for example, okcupid.com, plentyoffish.com, match.com, eharmony.com, chemistry.com) as well as a couple that might be focused on specific interests you might have. To look for a specialized dating site, go to your favorite search engine and type in something about your lifestyle followed by "dating site"—for example, "vegetarian dating site," "conservative Christian dating site," "single parent dating site," or "young professional dating site." Or make it about your interests; there are dating sites out there specifically for people who like everything from wine to kinky sex. Many of these will be small and have

limited activity, but it varies. There are pluses and minuses to every site, so don't sweat the details—just sign up for a bunch and figure out what you like.

2. *Create a profile and post some pictures.* Don't be shy. It's the twenty-first century, and no one should be embarrassed to use the Internet in their dating life. Men are primarily visual, so they're probably not even going to notice you most of the time if there's no picture. In fact, many Internet dating sites have run studies showing that people who have pictures in their profile get many, many times more messages than people who do not.¹

Your photos are important for two reasons—not just the one you'd expect. Of course men want to see what you look like; most have to be attracted to you before they can be interested in you. But they also use your photos to learn about your personality. *Marie Claire* published an amusing article about ten years ago where they posted the same profile over and over, but with different kinds of pictures: tomboy, intellectual, sexpot, sophisticate, and girl-next-door. The types of messages received—and the men writing them—varied widely between each version of the profile. The inescapable conclusion is that men take far more cues from the pictures you put up than from what you actually say about yourself.²

Post multiple photos. Doing so will make it easier for you to use them to tell a story about who you are. In addition, many men assume that profiles with just one picture are fake, especially if that photo is especially attractive or looks professional.

1. Fourteen times more likely, according to Margot Carmichael Lester, "Simple Tricks for Fab Photos," *Chemistry.com*, www.chemistry.com/datingadvice/Tricksfor-FabPhotos.

2. Megan Quitkin, "What Kind Of Men Does Your Look Attract," *Marie Claire (US)*, June 2003.

You probably know which of your pictures are most flattering, but if you want to experiment, upload a bunch of them to a photo rating site like hotornot.com. You'll get a large and unbiased sample of men rating them, with the results helpfully quantified for easy comparison. A female client of mine was using as her main profile picture a photo that she *insisted* was her most flattering. I asked her to indulge me, and to post that one and her ten next favorite pictures of herself onto hotornot. Her original picture got an average rating of 5.9; a different photo got a 7.2. Putting the higher-rated picture on her profile produced a similarly dramatic increase in the number of men messaging her.

You don't have to show a lot of skin to get a man's attention. You can convey sexuality and sexual attractiveness with the right picture in the right outfit (a hint of cleavage can work wonders) almost as much as with a bikini. If you *do* have a great body and want to show it off, but you don't want a man to assume that your physique is all you have to offer, then make your bikini shot one among many instead of your only or your main picture, and/or use a photo of yourself doing an activity like holding a surfboard or playing beach volleyball instead of just posing on the beach for the camera. But if you do have a great body, you'll probably look great in any full-length photo. All the guys who would have noticed you in lingerie will also notice you in a flattering outfit, *plus* all the guys who might have been intimidated or dismissive of you in lingerie will have no such issue with you in a pretty dress.

3. *Write a profile of two to three paragraphs at most.* Long profiles feel awkward and try-hard, while very short profiles give men nothing to go on. If you're on a site that asks a million free-form questions (such as "Describe your ideal first

date”), answer them if you want to—though with no more than a sentence or two—but know there’s no real reason to do so. No one is doing such thorough profile research on these sites before deciding whether to say hi to you. Furthermore, some of these questions are pretty personal. It shouldn’t bother you if a random coworker or acquaintance notices that you’re on a dating site, but you don’t necessarily want him or her reading through pages of your hopes and dreams. Once you start corresponding with someone, it’s okay for him to know that stuff—but at that point he can just ask you directly instead of looking you up. A little bit of feminine mystery certainly isn’t bad for romance, either.

In contrast, if you’re on a site that asks you a bunch of multiple-choice or drop-down menu questions, go for it. A lot of the time, these types of sites will use your answers to find men with similar or compatible answers who you might be interested in—or who might be interested in you.

4. *Set standards and use a filter.* If you followed steps 2 and 3, you’re probably about to be swamped with messages. Many dating sites have electronic filtering tools; use them—especially for age, location, and any other deal-breakers. Doing so will keep your inbox manageable.

You have no obligation to respond to anyone you’re not interested in. Just delete those messages; that’s what most people do. Some men don’t handle rejection well and can be very obnoxious. Use the Block or Ignore button right away—he isn’t your sister’s boyfriend whom you must find some way to get along with. Internet dating can be a giant time suck, so don’t let trolls make it worse. And don’t let them put you in a bad mood before you’re about to write back to a guy with great potential.

5. *Be realistic about the first message a man sends you.* I'm sure you'd love for every man who writes you to have carefully considered every word in your profile and to have written you a thoughtful note of introduction about what you have in common. What you're going to get (on most sites) is a fair amount of one-line introductions as well as some longer copy-and-paste messages with some parts lightly personalized. It's simply not efficient for men to invest a ton of time into an introduction before you've even shown that you are a real person and that you are actually checking your inbox.

Many dating sites make the majority of their money from male members, so they want to maximize the number of attractive women who appear to be members.³ Some sites won't delete women's profiles or show when they were last used. For all a man knows when he's messaging you for the first time, you might not have logged in to your account in years—and that's assuming that your profile was real to begin with. Porn retailers, competing dating sites, and other scammers frequently set up profiles with pictures of attractive women that spit back automatic responses to men who message them, like: "Come see me on XYZ site."

I'm not saying that you should respond to something completely generic or to a one-liner that doesn't communicate anything—you shouldn't—but don't assume a man is flighty or not serious because his first message doesn't address everything in your profile. But if his *second* message is similarly generic, cut bait.

3. For example, approximately 60 percent of the members on match.com are male. See "The Male/Female Ratio of Online Dating," *Online Dating Insider* (blog), www.edatereview.com/blog/2005/08/malefemale-ratio-of-online-dating.aspx.

6. *Stay local.* Many dating sites are worldwide. Even if you live in a big city like New York, over 95 percent of the world's English-speaking Internet users live nowhere near you. All things being equal, that means that over 95 percent of the men you might be interested in are similarly inaccessible. So it's not fate, bad luck, or, least of all, anything romantic that you're chatting with a great guy who lives two thousand miles away. It just means you're settling for someone who (presumably) isn't everything you want. Sure, long-distance relationships can work—anything *can* work. But is chatting with guys thousands of miles away really the best way to spend your time?

Besides, is your profile really *that* unique or different? Why did Mr. Thousands of Miles Away start messaging you, anyway? How serious do you think he really is about meeting someone if geography doesn't seem to matter at all? And don't fall for "I travel to [Your City] all the time." If that's true, he can message you when he's actually in town.

7. *Encourage the men who you want to pursue you.* As in real life, the man is usually going to make the first move on the Internet. But also as in real life, you can encourage the guys you're curious about to join the party. At a restaurant, it might be fleeting eye contact or "coincidentally" walking nearby. Online, many sites have a wink or smile function that let the man know you saw his profile and liked it. The next move is up to him. Of course, you can message him first if you want, too, and there's no harm in that—you just usually won't have to.

8. *Be honest.* Put your best foot forward, but don't be deceptive. You don't have to answer any questions you don't

want on your profile, but the ones you choose to answer should be answered honestly. Some women use creative subtraction when listing their age or weight, or use an old and no longer accurate photograph in their profile. These tactics might get more men interested, but the strategy breaks down when you eventually go on a date. I've heard this story from male clients probably about a thousand times. I assure you, none of those stories ended with "Even though she wasn't really like her description and even though I was annoyed by the deception, I decided to give her a chance anyway and it turned out she's amazing and so we started dating." None.

Similarly, if you only have a head shot up with no information about your figure and the guy asks for another picture—he wants to see a full-length picture of you because he wants to see if he's going to be physically attracted to your body type. You're welcome to be offended by that or to decide that you're not interested in him anymore, but don't dodge and weave with ambiguous or dishonest answers if it's obvious what he's looking for and it's obvious you're not it.

9. *Trust your intuition.* Men lie, too. He might be fifteen years older, seventy-five pounds heavier, and 100 percent more married than his profile says. Trust your intuition, always. Speak on the phone before you meet, always. Meet somewhere in public first, always.

When you're comfortable and ready to meet him, he should be able to do so within a week or two. If not, nine times out of ten there's something weird going on. Maybe he's married, maybe he's nothing like his description, maybe he actually lives a million miles away, or maybe he's sixteen and masturbating in the basement, or maybe all of the above.

10. *Save the in-person stuff for in person.* If you start chatting with someone online—through the site's chat feature, through instant messaging, or even by text message or e-mail—you may find yourself developing what seems like a deep connection surprisingly fast. It's much easier for a lot of people to type their innermost thoughts on a screen than to say them aloud to another human being. Conversations often get sexualized for the same reason.

Moving too quickly before you meet in person often sets both people up for disappointment. He may be great by text, but most adult relationships take place in the real world. Having been so intimate via chat can make the real first meeting awkward or make things extremely intense very quickly. Get to know him by chat if you like, but save the in-person stuff for in person—at least until you've met a few times.

FABULOUS FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First impressions play a fundamental role in how people see the world. They are formed in just a few seconds, but are amazingly durable—in large part because people actively seek out information that reinforces their first impressions while ignoring or misinterpreting evidence that contradicts them. We do so instinctively and automatically; it's not a conscious process. If I think that chocolate is healthy and I overhear someone talking about its health risks, my natural inclination is to tune him out or dismiss whatever he says. He was probably talking about some other kind of chocolate, anyway. But if I hear him say that chocolate is *healthy*, well, that's interesting. I might

talk to him for a few minutes and add whatever evidence he has about healthy chocolate to my own.⁴ Being wedded to first impressions may seem pointless or self-destructive. Maybe you're thinking that this trait should have been weeded out of existence through natural selection. Why hasn't it been?

My theory is that we evolved to favor first impressions because they allow us to quickly bring our intuition and experience to bear on a critical situation. While we may consider logic and reason to be superior decision-making tools, our brains have not always been as developed as they are today. When faced with a crucial decision like whether a situation is dangerous or whether an individual is trustworthy, our ancestors did not always have the time or intellectual capacity for reasoned analysis. Even today, we may not always be able to explain or even to know why we feel a certain way, but experience often feeds into intuition in a way that helps us come quickly to the right conclusion.

One study in the early 1990s tested the power of first impressions by videotaping graduate fellows teaching college classes. Volunteers were given a thirty-second video clip of each teacher and asked to rate their performance across thirteen different dimensions. It turned out that these first impression ratings were very similar to how students had rated

4. *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin (2011). This phenomenon isn't particular to women or to relationships. In fact, it could very well have led to the destruction of the human race. In the early 1980s, some paranoid leaders of the Soviet Union were convinced that the United States and its allies were planning a surprise first-strike attack. They sent spies to check on blood drives (in preparation for wounded soldiers) or government buildings with their lights on at night (in preparation for a sneak attack). Of course, no such strike was planned, but blood drives did happen and lights were occasionally left on. Soviet leaders took these events as confirmation of their suspicions and genuinely felt that an attack was imminent. This paranoia made for one of the most dangerous periods in the Cold War.

those teachers in course evaluations after a full semester's worth of classes. Does this result surprise you? It gets better. The researchers were then able to reduce the video clips to just six seconds without any loss in accuracy. In other words, volunteers could learn as much about a teacher's effectiveness from six seconds of video as they would from sitting in on the class for the entire semester.⁵

Most women are better off ignoring their first impressions of the men they meet if they are looking for a long-term monogamous relationship.

Because our first impressions are so often correct, we need to take extra care in situations where they might lead us astray if we're not paying careful attention. As you may have guessed, dating and relationships very much make up one of those areas. In fact, one of the messages in this book is that most women are better off ignoring their first impressions of the men they meet if they are looking for a long-term monogamous relationship.

When a man doesn't already know you or have some reason to know you, then approaching you—let alone attracting you—can easily feel awkward or artificial. Usually the first few minutes are a bit bumpy before the conversation settles into a good rhythm. Some men *do* consistently make great first impressions; these men are usually players who have had a lot of practice, and unless a player is ready to give up that lifestyle, he probably wouldn't make a good boyfriend anyway.

Most women want a long-term committed relationship

5. Nalini Ambady and Robert Rosenthal, "Half a Minute: Predicting Teacher Evaluations from Thin Slices of Nonverbal Behavior and Physical Attractiveness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64, no. 3 (March 1993).

and don't want to date a player, and most women also decide whether they are attracted to someone within the first few minutes of meeting him. But...

What most women say they want and what they really want is inherently self-contradictory and doomed to failure.

what kind of man can consistently make an attractive first impression walking up to you as a complete stranger? Players (and men trained by Love Systems). We've covered this before, but it bears repeating: what most

women say they want and what they really want is inherently self-contradictory and doomed to failure.

While first impressions can lead you astray, even systematically as in the above example, we still rely on them. And men do so as much as women. If you're going to be judged by your first impression, anyway, you may as well make a good one. So let's jump right into the five crucial secrets for making a great first impression on the men you come across.

Project Confidence

Even if you're not naturally confident, learn to make a confident-looking entrance. It's not that difficult; if I can train men to project a confidence that they don't feel while trying to chat you up for a couple hours, you can perfect a wordless twenty-second walk into a room. Keep your head up. Smile. Use slow, controlled movements. Don't look around in all directions—that suggests that you're looking for the party, whereas the impression you want to give is that wherever *you* are is where the party is.

Confidence is attractive because it has a strong signaling effect. You know yourself better than anyone, and if you

project self-confidence, it suggests that you know you have a lot to offer. (By the way, we're talking about confidence here, not arrogance. Although while we're talking about entrances and first impressions, you should be on fairly safe ground. I've seen many confident entrances, but I'm not really sure what an arrogant entrance would look like.)

Stand When You Can

Simply put, more of you is visible when you're standing than when you're sitting down, so there's a greater chance for men to notice you. The worst first impression is not making an impression at all. Furthermore, most women look better standing than seated, especially when wearing heels. Have you ever seen a magazine cover of a woman sitting down? Stay on your feet so he sees you—and sees you at your best.

If you're standing, you're also more likely to be moving, which means you're more likely to be noticed since the human eye is attracted to movement. And as I'll explain when we discuss “Being Approachable,” in most situations it's easier for a man to meet you when you're standing than sitting down. But there is one exception (see the box “The Bar Stool Exception”).

The Bar Stool Exception

Standing instead of sitting isn't always the law. Elevated seats in high-traffic areas can be great—but the key word here is *elevated*. If you sit in a regular-height chair placed on the ground when people are standing around, you will be invisible or even look sort of ridiculous.

Probably the only example of this type of seating arrangement that you're likely to come across is bar stools. Any man ordering a drink at the bar is going to notice you. Usually he will be standing near you by necessity for a couple minutes while he orders, which will make it very easy for him to start a conversation with you. And all you have to do to make it happen is choose the right place to sit.

In terms of sheer quantity, in my experience women on bar stools get approached more than anywhere else.

Location, Location, Location

The old joke in real estate is that only three factors are important for the value of a piece of property: location, location, and location. You could say the same thing about yourself when you go out. Whether you're having lunch with friends or a drink at a nightclub, make sure you're located where you can be seen.

If you're in a large venue, then being near the middle of the room is ideal. Don't worry about being seen from your best side or that you might be facing away from some men. If a man is curious about you from one angle, he'll walk around to get the full picture. If you're in a large venue but on an edge, such as near a wall, then make the best of it and ensure that you're facing out toward the center of the room. In other situations, you'll actually want to be on an edge. For example, a typical urban coffee shop is small enough that people inside can see you no matter where you happen to be, allows people to come and go easily, and often has a lot of foot traffic outside. In this scenario, sit by a window. The perfect man for you

may be walking by and decide to take a chance and come in to meet you.

Another easy way to increase your visibility is to split your time between multiple places. If you're at a big event, spend time in different rooms. If you're planning to go dance with your girlfriends on Friday night, have dinner at a nearby trendy restaurant first. If you're trying to decide between two parties, see if you can make it to both. This action has a powerful signaling effect as well, as high-value women tend to be very much in demand and have busy social schedules, or at least a lot of offers and invitations to choose from. If men perceive this about you, then any man who thinks that you are high-value will have his impression confirmed.

Circulate

Once you properly position yourself at a given location, move around. As I noted above, the human eye is attracted to movement. If you're hanging out with friends in a quiet corner of a restaurant, get up once in a while to go to the bathroom or get a drink at the bar; try to do so at least twice. The first time you do it, a man might notice you. The second time, he'll be ready for it and he might approach you when you're up. Moving around not only literally puts you in the path of more men, but also lets you show off your sexy walk and confidence. But don't overdo it; as a man, it can feel strange if the same woman walks past you several times in a night.

Be Animated

Laugh or talk excitedly sometimes—it gets attention. Men will notice you, and often an overheard snippet of conversation is

what will prompt him to start talking to you. Being animated also suggests you are fun and/or interesting to have a conversation with, which will further encourage him to join in. Obviously, don't take this idea too far—we all know the woman who laughs too loud and talks too loud; it's unattractive, often seems artificial, and usually has the opposite effect from what you're trying to achieve.

BEING APPROACHABLE

Getting men to notice you is only part of the battle; now you need to get them to approach you. Generally, the easier you make it for men to meet you, the more they will do so. If, instead, your priority is to meet certain *specific* men who you already have your eye on, skip to the “Get *THAT* Man to Meet You” section later in this chapter. Similarly, if you like that approach anxiety screens out most men, leaving only those who have no fear or who have lots of practice (see the box “Why Approach Anxiety?”), then you're also going to want to skip this section.

But assuming that you *would* like to meet more men, and maybe different men from those who are approaching you now, you're going to want to make it as easy as possible for them to approach you. If you've followed my advice thus far, then you should already be way ahead of most of your competition. You're out with one or two girlfriends, you've positioned yourself so that men notice you, there's something interesting about you or your outfit for men to comment on, and you're in a happy, outgoing mood. Now let's make it happen!

Why Approach Anxiety?

Many women are surprised to learn that most men aren't comfortable approaching (in a romantic and/or a sexual context) a woman whom they don't know or have a reason to know. We call this feeling "approach anxiety."

Since you may not be familiar with this emotion, let me give an analogy that should provoke a similar feeling. Imagine yourself getting called onstage to do a comedy show in front of a group of strangers, with your friends watching. The audience isn't necessarily hostile, but it's not going out of its way to be friendly, either, and if it smells blood, it *will* heckle. You're competing with a million side conversations, some of which are even about you. At any second someone might ask you why you're doing the show ("Why are you talking to us?") or why you don't already have a contract ("Why don't you have a girlfriend?").

Imagine that all of this has happened dozens of times, and now you're being called onstage again. Do you have that nervous feeling in your stomach yet? Good. That's approach anxiety. Remember that even if *you* happen to be friendly and warm and nice and easy to talk to, a man has no way of knowing that before speaking to you.

Part of the reason that approach anxiety comes as a surprise to many women is that it doesn't *seem* as if men are very shy. Sometimes, especially at night, this false impression is due to alcohol ("liquid courage"), but not always; a lot of women get hit on plenty by sober men, too. However, these men who don't have approach anxiety or who have suppressed it are a minority with an outsize influence. It only takes a handful of men hitting on everything that moves to

make it seem like the majority of guys are sharks. After all, those experiencing the anxiety are, of course, not approaching you.

If you've been reading these chapters in order, there's another, deeper, reason why you may be surprised. We spent much of chapters 3 and 4 covering just how demanding of a master natural selection can be. Since the male evolutionary strategy is to spread his seed widely, it may seem that a trait that makes it difficult for him to meet women would be distinctly unhelpful. It would be difficult to explain how such a trait could exist today—and be so widespread—if it conferred such an evolutionary disadvantage for so many generations. However, I'm not so sure that approach anxiety *has* been much of a disadvantage until very recently. Almost all of human history has taken place in a world very different from the one in which most of us live today. The idea of entering a public space to mingle with strangers and pursue romantic and/or sexual relationships would have been inconceivable to most of our ancestors. And once it was conceived of, it would have been strictly forbidden. It's hard to see why—or, for that matter, how—natural selection would have favored men without approach anxiety.

Today, our society both punishes and reinforces approach anxiety. When a man comes over to talk to you, the default expectation is that he's supposed to lead the beginning of the conversation. After all, he's the one who approached you. But what is he supposed to say? If he interprets "be yourself" to mean that he should say hi and ask the usual get-to-know-you questions, most women would be bored. You probably don't have the time or interest to spend twenty minutes with every random guy who comes along asking where you're

from and what you do for a living and what you do for fun. But if he starts with something light and situational like “Do you come here often?” he risks your treating his introduction as a cheesy pickup line. If he opens with something that makes you laugh, you might accuse him of being a well-polished pickup artist. And so on.

Most women aren't particularly helpful at this point. For some women, it's validating and a kind of a social sport to tease and then reject men. Others have learned through experience to cut men off right away when they're not interested or don't want to be hassled. Still others would welcome the approach, but sometimes a friend is jealous or doesn't want their conversation to be interrupted. Any man who has ever approached women out of the blue has experienced at least a few humiliating rejections.

Usually this unhelpfulness is not deliberate, although that doesn't make it any less real. It's hard to go from a standing start to full participation in a conversation with a stranger. It's awkward and most people aren't naturally equipped to be good at it. That's why we tell men not to expect the woman to be fully engaged in the conversation at first and that he should anticipate doing 90 percent of the talking for the first few minutes, until she warms up into the conversation.

Choose High-Traffic Areas

It's easier for a man to approach you when there are a lot of people around you than it is when you're surrounded by empty space. The latter scenario can put more pressure on him if he feels like the whole room is watching him try to pick you up.

It also restricts his options in terms of what he can do to start a conversation with you, and forces him to be more forward than he might have otherwise been comfortable with. I've often seen men pass up these sorts of approaches, even if they were attracted, in favor of a woman who was better positioned.

Explaining this behavior requires a small detour. As we teach at Love Systems, there are two basic ways for a man who you don't know to start a romantic or flirtatious conversation: direct or indirect. Being direct means making his intentions known straightaway, for example: *Hi—I saw you standing over there and I'd be kicking myself if I didn't come meet you and see what you're like. My name is...* Indirect means starting the conversation with a pretext, for example: *Hey, we need you to settle this. Does an 'I love you' count if the person was drunk at the time?* or *We're planning a surprise party for our friend. Should we go with a jungle theme or an '80s theme?* Such "Love Systems opinion openers" are a common (but not the only) way of starting a conversation indirectly. If executed correctly, he'll change the subject as soon as possible—you're not going to fall for a guy by talking about '80s parties all night—but it serves to break the ice and makes starting the conversation less awkward.⁶

In the grand scheme of things, the difference between direct and indirect approaches is not all that important. Even on an indirect approach, the man should make his intentions known within fifteen to twenty minutes at most, at which point the

6. This explanation is a simplification of the Love Systems methodology. In reality "direct" and "indirect" are part of a continuum. There are more "direct" ways of approaching than "direct openers" and more "indirect" ways than "indirect openers" (of which opinion openers are only a subset) as well as classes of openers in between. Bringing in the full range of detail would not change any of the conclusions from this section.

conversation will be at the same point as if he had started directly. However, many men prefer indirect approaches or use them exclusively.

But back to the point—a Love Systems opinion opener has to appear spontaneous and have a bit of an “I’d ask anyone but you happened to be right here” quality. That’s impossible to pull off if he has to cross a moat of empty space to get to you. So if you’re in that sort of position, you’re forcing any man who wants to meet you to not only get over his approach anxiety and come up to you, but to do so in one of the most challenging and intimidating ways possible.

That strategy would be fine if you want to screen men out. But if you want to make it easier for men to meet you, stay places where people circulate. At a lot of nightspots, the bar area or an outdoor smoking patio can be great for this. At parties, it’s often the kitchen or wherever the food and drink is. These choices may seem obvious, but hold that thought...

Choose Spots Where There’s an Excuse to Linger

Why did I just mention the bar area or smoking patio, but not equally highly trafficked areas like the coat check, entrance/exit, DJ booth, or outside the bathrooms? The former are easy places to start conversations because they provide an excuse to linger; the latter are usually more awkward because they do not.

The excuse to linger is not only so you and he are able to have a conversation there, but also so he has a few moments after noticing you to actually approach you. I can’t count how many times I’ve been with men who have seen a woman they wanted to meet, and, blink, she was gone. That’s one of the

reasons I teach clients what I call the eyes-feet reflex: see someone interesting with your eyes; start moving your feet. But for most other men, the natural pattern is not “See woman. Start conversation”; it’s more like “See woman. Pause. Think. Start conversation.” If he’s not somewhere he can linger—and where you yourself are lingering—the moment may well have passed before he’s even able to open his mouth.

Keep the Volume Down

The louder it is, the fewer men will talk to you and the more difficult it will be for the two of you to get to know each other. This is yet another reason that if you insist on going to loud nightclubs or concerts, the bar or outdoor areas can be great for meeting men. Those places *must* be a bit quieter: the former so that staff can hear orders and communicate, and the latter because of neighbors.

Of course, you can use this principle for its opposite effect, too. If you’re out with your girlfriends and genuinely just want to dance, find the loudest spot on the dance floor. Your ears won’t thank you, but you’re more likely to be left alone.

Smile

If you look like you’re having a good time, more men will approach you. A smiling face—just like a laughing face, as discussed in chapter 5—will make you seem more inviting, and easier and more pleasant to talk to. Be sure to smile with both your eyes and your mouth, as smiling just with your mouth comes across as fake. As with all of these techniques, don’t push this one to an extreme. If it looks like you’re having the absolute time of your life, people may not want to interrupt.

If You're Sitting, Have an Empty Seat Nearby

You already know that it's best to stand wherever possible, but doing so is not realistic all of the time. When you must sit, try to make sure there's another place to sit next to you. It's really difficult for a man to get to know you when he's standing and you're sitting. He's going to look and feel awkward as the conversation goes on, and most nonplayers won't even try to meet you in that situation.

If You Do Reject Someone, Be Nice About It

Unless he's being offensive, of course. It's just good karma to deliver a rejection politely. You don't get to whine about a man blowing you off or not returning your calls if you helped ruin the night for a half-dozen others. At least not to me.

Perhaps more important, if other men see you or your friends brutally shutting someone down, they'll be less likely to approach you themselves, and you won't just be excluding men who can't handle the heat. I've seen many high-value men change their minds about approaching someone after seeing her act rude or dismissive to other men. This hesitation isn't out of loyalty to a random member of the same gender; it's because women who do this—they exist in every bar and nightclub in the world—tend to be shallow, insecure, and narcissistic. (The technical term in male-speak is “superficial attention whore.”) *You* may not actually be like this, but if you act like women who are, many men will never care to meet you to find out.

Obviously, you still need to reject men whom you're not interested in. If you've tried being nice about it first, no one will blame you for being a bit more direct thereafter.

GET *THAT* MAN TO MEET YOU

What if you're getting noticed and approached plenty, but not by men you really want? How do you get those guys in particular over to you? There are four techniques to help you here, and I've listed them in order from least to most aggressive. But all of them put the ball in his court. Even if you are the one who is choosing or pursuing him, he should feel like he is the one choosing or pursuing you.

This principle may seem limiting, especially if you think of yourself as an empowered and confident woman, and I don't blame you; I would probably find it annoying to have to bait someone into taking the lead instead of just doing so myself. But the world is what it is. Attractive and emotionally stable women are rarely *seen* to pursue men aggressively; they tend to be subtle. Women who blatantly pursue a man tend to be less attractive or come off as stalker-ish or unbalanced; these probably aren't the women you want the potential man of your dreams to associate you with.

Furthermore, people value what they have to work for. If a man is used to having to work a bit for a certain caliber of woman, he's not going to value as much a woman who seemed to come very easily. This is less of an issue if you're looking for something primarily physical, but it can be a bigger problem if you're looking for a committed relationship.

Proximity

I first saw how effective proximity can be on the second night of the bootcamp at which I met Phil, the doctor. That night, Phil was on fire. He was especially successful using

relative social status (see chapter 2) and seemed to know everyone in the club. Women were staring, wondering “Who is this guy?” and wanting to meet him.

This particular nightclub had two levels. I was on the upstairs balcony looking out over the main part of the bar, which gave me a great vantage point to keep track of all of the clients and instructors below. My position also let me see what would have been invisible at ground level—the peculiar geography that a crowd takes on when women want a man to approach them.

I saw a few different groups of women all standing about six feet away from Phil. None were positioned to face him; most were either facing away or at right angles to him. Whenever Phil moved, a similar pattern would form around him in his new location with many of the same women. Every time Phil left his instructor to do an approach, it was natural for him to approach one of the women who “just happened” to be standing nearby. Pretty much every woman who Phil met that night was part of one of these proximity groups.

I tested this idea by myself for a few nights after the boot-camp. After I’d flirted with a few women and established that I was Preselected, I started approaching only women who were at most a few feet away from me, and I noticed something very interesting. Normally when I approach a woman from behind or the side, I’m likely to get a surprised reaction at first, then she’ll take a second or two to say hi and be part of the conversation, which is natural when you’re not expecting to be spoken to or interrupted at that moment. But on these nights, meeting women who were standing near me, almost none of them hesitated when I started talking to them. They were already aware of my presence and anticipating my arrival.

You can use this technique, too. If there's a specific man you want to meet, try to plant yourself up to six feet away, but don't directly face him. It's not a guarantee he'll approach you, but every little detail increases your odds.

Eye Contact

You probably know how this one works, or at least you should, since most women already have this tool in their arsenal. Glance over at him. Make eye contact for a second. Look away, or wait for him to look away. Throw in a smile if you want.

You can do this two or three times if you suspect he didn't get the message the first time. To be clear, I mean two or three times while both of you are in the venue. If you spot a cute guy in line at the grocery store, you might end up glancing at him a couple times within just a few minutes. If you see him at a party, your two or three times making eye contact should take place over the course of the whole night.

Sometimes a guy gets the eye contact signal and may be interested in meeting you, but for whatever reason isn't able to come over right away. Maybe he's already in the middle of a conversation or is trying to think of the right thing to say before he approaches. But once you've made eye contact a couple of times, you've made your point; the rest is up to him.

If he hasn't approached after a few glances, let it go. I remember being very proud of Edward's progress at one point during his bootcamp and pointing out to him that an attractive woman near our table kept looking over at him. Even though he had earlier described himself as someone who had no luck with women before the bootcamp, he still reacted with: "I know. She's been doing that for a while. It's getting weird." They never met that night.

“Accidentally” Bump Into Him

I like this technique because it not only gets him to meet you but also gives him an easy on-ramp to start the conversation. All you have to do—literally—is bump into him. It can happen when he’s walking, when you’re walking, or you’re both in line together. All you need is a bump that is big enough for you to say “I’m sorry” or “Excuse me.” If you want to give him more to work with, which I’d recommend, you can add a friendly explanation like “New shoes” or “And I’m not even drinking.” And if you want to take this approach one step further, put your hand lightly on his arm, smile, and hold eye contact when you apologize.

Now here’s where most women seem to get it wrong: *The bump, apology, and (optional) comment is ALL you need to give him.* If a man is interested in you, you’ve provided him more than enough to run with. Even if he can’t talk at that particular moment or he’s an extremely nervous sort, odds are that if he’s interested in you, he’ll come find you later. If you keep initiating conversation at this point, you’re putting yourself in the pursuer role, with all the disadvantages and negative associations that we’ve covered.

If the man seems especially confident, socially savvy, or in demand, I recommend the Mixed Messages Special. Bump into him. Bring your face close to his and use your slowest, most seductive voice when you apologize. And then leave to rejoin your friends (don’t look back!). This will drive a certain kind of man crazy, and he’ll need to meet you again so he can figure out what *that* was all about.

Oh, and don’t spill his drink. That’s just annoying.

Start the Conversation

Just like with bumping into him, starting a conversation with him should be purely limited to giving him enough to work with if he wants to get to know you better. No more. Almost all of the examples below are “spontaneous” in nature, so you’d use these if you “just happened” to be near him in a line or some other high-traffic area. And if you’re with me so far, that’s where you’d be anyway.

Functional and Situational Openers

Earlier in this chapter, we introduced some Love Systems concepts like indirect openers, of which the opinion opener (to which we’ll return in just a moment) is the most common. Two other kinds of indirect openers are functional (for example, “Do you have the time?”) and situational (for example, “It sure is loud in here”). We don’t recommend these to most of our male clients because these openers don’t do very much to advance the conversation. But for women, they’re perfect—driving the conversation forward isn’t your job. You’re just trying to help him out by giving him an easy way to start talking to you. I’ve included a few more functional and situational openers below; they’re not magic or unique in themselves, and once you get comfortable with them, you can probably create dozens of similar examples on the spot.

- *“Would you please hold this for a second?”*

Give him your purse or some other accessory to hold. Then take a second or two to do something with your hands: retrieve your phone, check your program (if you’re at a gallery,

museum, theatre, concert hall, etc.), or even adjust something on your outfit. This last option can also be used to draw his attention to a specific part of your body; most men don't know what all of those buckles and straps do anyway, so go ahead and fake your "adjustment," if you want—he won't know the difference.

- *"What is that you're drinking?"*

Obviously, you can use this opener only if you're somewhere where drinks are being served, and only if his drink is an unusual color or shape. It is most effective when it appears to be completely spontaneous—usually when you're waiting to get a drink yourself. If he's interested in you, he'll probably respond by asking what you are drinking or ordering, and go from there.

- *"Hey, did you go to [your high school or college]?"* or *"Hey, did you used to work at [your job or former job]?"*

This opener is especially good if you can make it seem more realistic by throwing in a detail or two like: "I think you were in Intro to Sociology with me" or "Did you work with a guy named Cameron Taylor?"

I like this line because it also tells him something about you that he can build on. He probably didn't work or go to school at the same place as you, but he might know someone who did. Or he might have something interesting to say about one of the details you offered. Don't be offended if he teases you about something you said; most likely that means he's interested in you. Just like the boy who used to pick on you in the playground in second grade...

Love Systems Opinion Openers

Another way to make the first move is to use an opinion opener. Just like when men use them, an opinion opener should usually be a topical question about which everyone can easily have an opinion and where people can disagree. Think of any situation that you or any of your friends have been in where you could conceivably want an independent opinion or a specifically male perspective.

For example:

- *"Hi, we need your opinion. Do you think my friend Michelle here should dye her hair blonde?"*

Using your friend Michelle's name is almost like an introduction, especially if she is standing right there, and might prompt the men to introduce themselves. If they do that, they're settling in for a conversation, and you can let them take the lead from here.

- *"Hey guys, we need your perspective here. Would you rather your girlfriend cook you an amazing meal for your birthday or take you to your favorite restaurant?"*

This question should be asked as if you are in the midst of giving advice to a female friend with a relationship issue and want a random male opinion—*not* as if you're taking a survey. When done well, this opener has the additional advantage of possibly encouraging the men with whom you're talking to tell you whether they have a girlfriend or not. (Not that you'll necessarily get the truth, of course; as you probably know, many people seem to forget that they have a significant other when

there's an attractive stranger in front of them.) If not, well, now you're talking.

All of these tactics and tricks are fairly straightforward. But what if the man who you want to meet is already talking with other people?

When a man wants to meet *you* but you're surrounded by friends, he is usually best off approaching your entire group and, if possible, starting the conversation with everyone. If you're in a mixed group, we'd tell him to talk to the men first, but in an all-female group, we'd tell him to start the conversation with the woman who seems the most approachable, and then try to draw you in from there.

The former technique works just fine in reverse; if you meet another woman who isn't dating or interested in the man you want, she might introduce you to him. But the latter does not. The male ego doesn't really allow for it. If you start talking to one single man who is attracted to you and five minutes later shift your attention to another man in the same group, the first man is probably going to try to sabotage you. Yes, I realize that men do this with women all the time, and for some reason women are supposed to just accept it, but most men just won't.

Chapter Seven

Now Let's Make It Even Easier...

We've now talked about how to meet more men and higher-quality men in the most difficult of situations to control: when you're out at some public or social event and where most people are strangers. Now let's apply these techniques to other common—and easier—places to meet men: through friends, at work, or through school, hobbies, and other activities. We're still focused on *meeting* men here, so things like turning a male friend into more will have to wait until the next chapter, when we talk about flirting and attraction.

MEETING MEN AT WORK

Some women dismiss out of hand the idea of dating in the workplace. Sexism and judgment are alive and well, and your dating and relationship decisions can affect your job or career. If you date a superior, or even someone in another department or someone who wasn't a superior when you started dating, then you risk whispers that you're sleeping your way to the top. Have a couple different dating or relationship stories

following you around, and people might question your stability. (The same thing can happen to men, too, but the threshold is generally much higher). Even simple jealousy—from men *or* women—can worsen your reputation. Some companies have policies against interoffice romance. Further, the workplace itself is becoming physically less conducive to romance; you might be just as likely to freelance from home with limited human contact as you are to occupy a perch in a sea of humanity on the seventeenth floor of Big Company Inc.

Even if any or all of the above factors apply to you, you can *still* use your professional life to help your social life. You can connect with people, both men and women, who might be able to introduce you to the kind of men you want to meet. You can stock your pipeline for the future: maybe a previously attached man will become single, or another man's lifestyle changes will help you see him in a new light. It's only on TV shows that everyone stays in the same job year after year; even if someone might be off-limits now for whatever reason, you may well not even be working together in six months.

And don't worry—all of the techniques we're about to cover are 100 percent CEO-approved. Before Love Systems, I worked in middle and senior management positions at a variety of different companies, and my circle includes many other business people who have similar responsibilities. In fact, I'd go a step further—most of what you're about to read can actually be extremely *valuable* to your career.

First Impressions

You already know how much first impressions matter and how difficult they are to change; this rule applies just as much to

your first day on a new job as it does to the first few minutes at a party. Be outgoing and social from Day One. You'll meet people, and your boss will (or at least should) recognize the value of the social capital and relationships that you are building. But be sure to network broadly; if you've been making friends with everyone, it won't seem unusual if you happen to be joking around with the cute guy from down the hall. Women who only seem to turn on when in the presence of attractive men are easily identified and don't do themselves any professional *or* social favors.

Depending on your situation, you don't have to limit your networking to your immediate office environment. If you work from home and your employer or client is nearby, suggest coming down to their office for a meet and greet or to talk about some ideas you have about a project you're working on. That initiative and face-to-face time will probably help you professionally, and you never know whom you might meet or have coffee with. If you *are* in an office, introduce yourself to your neighbors. Did the mail for another company on the other side of the office park get accidentally delivered to you? Offer to walk it over. If you're in a big office building and your company is doing a charity drive, why not see if the folks you share a floor with want to join forces? If there's an office cafeteria or a food court in or near your building, eat there once in a while, and go alone. Whether you're in-office or at home, some positions will give you the opportunity to network in similar ways with suppliers, partners, and/or customers. All of these examples are the workplace equivalent of circulating through high-traffic areas when you're at a big anonymous social event: you're just trying to get noticed by as many people as possible.

Making Connections

In contrast to meeting men in your social life, at work there (hopefully) aren't gender-based norms and rules in which the man leads the conversation and the woman plays gatekeeper. You can and should take the initiative to build personal connections with people you meet. Even the most hard-charging culture has room for you to ask someone what they did over the weekend in the first thirty seconds of a Monday morning meeting.

Avoid e-mail when there's an opportunity to build a relationship. Maybe HR needs a form from you. Sure, you could e-mail it back to them, but if you've got a minute, why not print the form up and walk it up there? It's a great chance to meet people in that department. Besides, you never know who else might notice you when you're on your way over there.

One systematic way to network and build personal connections is to appoint yourself the unofficial den mother for new staff. Even if your company has a formal orientation program, someone still needs to show the new hire around and tell him or her which elevator feels shaky if there are too many people in it or that Mary the receptionist brings in amazing cupcakes every Thursday morning. Plus, every time you introduce someone new around, it gives you yet another opportunity to talk to everyone else in your office. As Seneca, the famous Roman philosopher, allegedly said: "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." Maybe the morning you introduce people to the new admin assistant is the morning that Sheila in accounting is wondering when her attractive brother will find a nice girl. That's how "lucky" things happen, like invitations to drop by some party or picnic where you

meet a great guy who has already been told wonderful things about you. Or, if dating at work isn't a problem, maybe this is the morning that newly single Steve is wondering who to invite to that concert on Friday. And of course, helping a new employee get situated and comfortable will impress your boss at the same time.

Another way to network is to get involved in company activities. Helping to plan a holiday party or organize a charity drive can be a great opportunity to meet people or deepen relationships. Plus, it gives people another context in which you can project competence, thus winning points not only with your boss, but also with men who are tired of dating needy women who can't get anything done for themselves.

Lastly, go to every conference and networking event relevant to your industry or position that you can. Not only will you automatically have something in common with everyone there, but it will also be incredibly easy to meet specific men who interest you without awkwardness. If you're a professional woman attending a professional conference to meet other professionals, there is no reason not to walk up to whomever you want and introduce yourself and your organization.

The Next Level

If you want to take things further with someone at work, plan a happy hour or some other social event that would be natural for you to invite him to. Such events are great because they are low pressure—he and you can talk and get to know each other without that “now or never” feeling that can make things awkward when two strangers are flirting. You don't have to wonder if he's going to ask for your phone number or if you'll ever see him again. This scenario lets you take full advantage

of two of the most powerful tools in any woman's arsenal—the ability to walk away, and playing hard to get. But we'll cover all the mechanics of flirting and attracting men in the next chapter.

A Final Warning

Use your judgment. I'm not going to waste your time too much with the obvious warnings—don't get a reputation at work, don't date or make an advance at someone you supervise, don't date or make an advance at anyone you are responsible for buying from or selling to, and so on. The more senior your position, the less you'll be able to do within your company and the more you'll want to stick to situations such as conferences and networking events. But the more senior you are, the more such opportunities will be open to you.

MEETING MEN THROUGH FRIENDS

Any friend can introduce you to the man or men of your dreams, but only certain friends are likely to do so. While you no doubt value your close friends for much more than their ability to help you meet desirable men, it may be worth thinking about which of your current or potential friends, contacts, and acquaintances might be able to help you reach your dating and relationship goals. In general, such people will have one or more of the following qualities:

- **They know lots of people and host or attend a lot of social events.** Dating is, to some extent, a numbers game. All things being equal, the more men you put in your path, the better your odds of finding the men or the relationships you

want, unless you're fishing in the wrong pond entirely. Which brings me to another important quality:

- **They are connected to the kind of men you like.** Simply meeting more and more people isn't useful if you don't tend to be attracted to the type of people they know. Befriend people who are more likely to know the kind of men you like: if you like musicians, then a fellow musician, promoter, or concert hall manager will probably be able to introduce you to more men you like than would be possible for even the world's most social bank teller.

People also tend to move in circles with those who share personality traits or interests. Cultivate friendships with people who have qualities that you're looking for in a partner. Similarly, if you have a crush on a specific man or men, it doesn't hurt to know who they know. He may not have noticed on his own how wonderful you are, but seeing his friends talking you up and inviting you out with them may help him see the light.

- **They're on board with your agenda.** Certain people won't want to help. A man who has a crush on you, or a woman who is interested in the same sort of men as you, may make a great friend in other areas of your life but is not likely to set you up with the man of your dreams. (At least not until they resolve their own love life; help them with that and they might return the favor.)

Realize that such people are socially very much in demand; you're not the only person trying to befriend them or who wants access to what they have. Make sure *you* add value, too. Always give them a reason to be happy for inviting you somewhere or introducing you to someone.

When I started to understand dating and attraction and began to improve my ability to succeed with women, many of my male friends suddenly became very interested in playing a greater role in my social life. I was generally happy to introduce them to women I'd met or to bring them out with me to parties or other events. A few guys really didn't handle themselves well; they got jealous, became resentful of my success, and even tried to undermine me. As we know, a woman will often look to a man's friends and how he interacts with them for clues about what kind of person he is. Those friends who brought me down got invited out less and less; those who reinforced my positive impressions got invited out more. Friendships aren't about keeping score, but they are about reciprocity: if a particular person is adding a lot of value to your life, make sure to add a lot of value back to his or hers.

On the other hand, if you *are* being a good friend and adding value to someone's life, then it's okay to ask for value in return. If your friend knows someone whom you are interested in, you can ask him or her to set you up. I'd stay away from blind dates or other obvious setups; these can feel awkward or artificial. It's better for your friend to just invite both of you to a party or other event where the two of you can get to know each other without an explicit framework of a setup.

MEETING MEN THROUGH ACTIVITIES, SCHOOL, ETC.

We've already covered the importance of involving yourself in activities where you can put yourself in the path of the kind of men who interest you. Once involved, all you really have to do is show up, participate, and look good. Men will notice you.

That said, there is a technique that you should use the first time you're part of a group that meets regularly—anything from a college class to a charity event planning committee. Sit next to the man you're most attracted to. Even if there are much closer seats nearby. Even if it feels a bit weird. The awkwardness will fade, but your prime real estate probably will not. With groups that meet regularly, people tend to establish seating patterns and then stick to them; if you and your friends meet up regularly at the same restaurant, you might find that you all sit in roughly the same configuration each time. In college or continuing education classes, it may even be mandatory that once you choose your seat you must stay there for the rest of the semester.

Chapter Eight

He's Talking to You. Now What?

He might have started the day as a stranger or he might have always been in your extended network, but either way, he's talking with you now. Assuming that he's someone who you're interested in or at least curious about, what do you do next? The first two things you want to accomplish are to solidify his attraction to you, and to make him work for your attraction to him (but not so much so that he thinks you're uninterested or unattainable).

ATTRACTION

The most important rule in attracting a man is that you should not appear to be trying to do so. You should have a plan, but he shouldn't know that; his interest in you should seem to come purely as a by-product of how wonderful and appealing you are, or of the chemistry that he notices that he has with you. He should be the

The most important rule in attracting a man is that you should not appear to be trying to do so.

pursuer.¹ Your job is to play traffic cop. Let him drive the car, but through your influence, it should end up going at the speed you want in the direction that you want.

Men are flattered when a woman is interested, but too much interest too soon can be off-putting. They get the same sort of feeling as you do when the situation is reversed. Actually, it's worse. Even high-value, attractive men can occasionally come across as pushy—especially since such men are often confident and risk-takers—so a guy being forward does not necessarily mean that he's not high-value. In contrast, high-value women rarely push.

Think Attractive

If you don't know him well, or at all, you can assume that the time he has invested in getting to know you means that he is at least somewhat interested in you. This assumption is almost certainly justified if he is a stranger approaching you out of the blue, and it's also most probably the case if a man you know (but who isn't a close friend) seems to be spending a lot of one-on-one time with you without an obvious reason. The attraction may not be very deep at this point—after all, he hardly knows you—but what is there should usually give you something to work with and allow you to use some of the techniques we discuss here.

Assume that a man is attracted to you even if he doesn't seem to be talking to you in a particularly flirtatious, romantic, or sexual way. Many men like to stay under the radar when

1. At Love Systems we teach men how to flip the script and get you to chase him. We'll discuss this scenario briefly later in this chapter, but for now know that the overwhelming majority of men don't know how to flip the script, so we'll focus here on the more traditional scenario of the man pursuing you.

they approach a woman, for example, starting the conversation with some kind of pretext, like asking for directions or even using a Love Systems opinion opener. If he makes an effort to continue this conversation past the pretext onto unrelated subjects, then at least nine times out of ten, he's attracted to you. If you exclude situations where you are the obvious or only person to talk to—for example, you're not sitting next to him on an airplane or waiting in line together—I'd say it's closer to ten times out of ten. My friend Shawna and I had an argument about this one night when we were with some friends at a restaurant/bar. Some guy had started talking to her but abruptly left after a few minutes. I'd been half-listening in, and I attributed his withdrawal to her offhand reference to her boyfriend. She disagreed and insisted that the man had not been hitting on her. So I challenged her to count how many people this man started conversations with who were attractive women and how many were not. By the time we left the restaurant, he'd talked to at least five other attractive women and no one else—that is, zero conversations initiated with random male strangers or obviously unattractive women. This is how single men spend their time when they go out to places where there are a lot of attractive single women; meeting women is a major reason why men go to such places in the first place.

Odds and percentages aside, assuming that he is attracted to you is a great attitude to have, whether or not it happens to be true. This doesn't mean putting yourself on a pedestal; you shouldn't *say* that you think he's attracted to you. Just assume it is true. Why does it matter what attitudes or beliefs you adopt if they're not supposed to influence what you say? The answer can be found in how communication actually works. The words you speak are only a small part of what you communicate. Consider

the oft-quoted statistic that 93 percent of interpersonal communication is nonverbal, leaving the words to account for only 7 percent.² This 93 percent is often subconscious and governed by your attitudes and beliefs and feelings; it's much harder to control than your words. That's why people who want to know your true feelings on something, from police investigators to Love Systems graduates, will pay much more attention to your nonverbal communication than to what you're actually saying. Later in this chapter, we'll talk about how to read others' nonverbal communication as well.

But back to the interesting man who is talking to you. If you assume that he's attracted to you, that assumption will influence 93 percent of what you communicate to him. High-value women tend to get hit on a lot and develop a default (even if nonverbalized) assumption that men who approach them are attracted to them. If you act like one of these women, he'll assume that you *are* one of these women. Since high-value men tend to pursue high-value women, he will treat your attitude as validation of his initial interest in you.³ Of course, as we discussed in chapter 2, men don't tend to be more attracted to a woman because they know that other men are interested in her. However, a man who thinks that you're attractive will look at you more carefully and with more hesitation if you act like men don't usually pursue

2. James Borg, *Body Language: 7 Easy Lessons to Master the Silent Language* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: FT Press, 2010). The 93 percent figure is in some dispute; other researchers have claimed that Borg misinterpreted the data and that the true number is between 60 and 70 percent. (Albert Mehrabian, "Silent Messages'—A Wealth of Information About Nonverbal Communication (Body Language)," in *Personality & Emotion Tests & Software: Psychological Books & Articles of Popular Interest* (Los Angeles: self-published, 2009). Either way, nonverbal communication is critically important, and holds more weight than the actual words you speak.

3. David M. Buss and Todd K. Shackelford, "Attractive Women Want It All: Good Genes, Economic Investment, Parenting Proclivities, and Emotional Commitment," *Evolutionary Psychology* 6, no. 1 (2008).

you. Your brain works the same way: it takes in and processes so much information each day that without categorization by inference, it, and you, would be overwhelmed.

Nonverbal Communication— A Musical Analogy

To get an intuitive sense of how verbal and nonverbal communication work together, think of music. The words you use in verbal communication are comparable to the notes or chords for a song: they provide the structure. A piece of music can be played with different instruments, at different tempos, and so on, but there should be an underlying series of notes and/or chords that make sense. The sentence "I can do that" can be given multiple different meanings simply by stressing different words or varying your tone and cadence—try it. However, the actual words still have to make sense together, or your ability to communicate this range of specific meanings and emotions would be significantly impaired.

Take The Beatles' song "Let it Be" as an example. In the key of C major, the first four chords of the song are C/G/A minor/F. This arrangement isn't arbitrary. Those chords make musical sense together and were chosen for a reason. You could change, say, the G chord to a D minor and the song would still be workable (though with a markedly different feel). You couldn't just change the G chord, or any other chord in the song, to something random like B minor or E. Either of those would be as jarring as if you replaced a word in this sentence with a completely random one from the dictionary.

However, Paul McCartney didn't just scrawl "C/G/A minor/F" on a piece of paper one day and then declare victory.

There are literally millions of songs with the exact same chord progression. What gives this particular sequence its meaning is the choice of instruments, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics. Add those in, and you turn a mechanical chord progression into a song that communicates its full meaning and emotion. Those elements are your nonverbal communication.

Thus, your choice of words is important and should not be ignored, but think of them only as the sheet music for your conversational performance. Most of the meaning that you'll convey comes from the nonverbal factors. Incidentally, keeping this analogy in your head will probably also help you find more appropriate and better use of text, e-mail, and even phone communication, since you'll be conscious of how limited these tools are as well as the potential for miscommunication.

Another reason to assume that men who approach you are attracted to you is that it puts you squarely into screening mode. If you start asking a man questions to assess whether you're interested in him, and he answers them, he's putting himself in a position of trying to pass your tests.⁴ Remember the psychological principle of cognitive dissonance: our brains try to prevent us from holding contradictory beliefs. If a guy begins investing in you and meeting your challenges, he's going to want to believe that you are worth the effort.

You can see this principle operating in other areas of life.

4. Answering those questions would be a mistake on his part—and one no Love Systems graduate should ever make. We teach men not to jump through your hoops or do anything explicit to try to attract you until *you* have shown some signs that you're interested in him first. But don't worry too much about this; most of the men you'll meet have never heard of Love Systems, and even a Love Systems graduate will appreciate that you have high standards and know what you're looking for.

Some companies will make their job application processes longer and more demanding than necessary in order to increase the chance that successful applicants will ultimately accept the company's job offer. Candidates will have already had to convince themselves that the job was something they really wanted; otherwise, why were they putting themselves through the process? It's been suggested that hazing rituals have the effect of increasing attachment to the group among those who undergo them—also in part due to cognitive dissonance.⁵ Even though a few gentle questions like “What do you do for fun?” or “What was your longest relationship?” hardly qualify as hazing, making a man jump through a few hoops will make him value you more.

Of course, screening is a valuable process in itself, not only for what screening men says about you. For a man you don't know well, you'll have to screen him to find out if he's worth your time. We'll address this when we look at screening in more detail later in the next chapter.

A final note about your attitude: No matter what happens, keep a rock-solid presence. Avoid appearing flustered, nervous, or unsure of yourself. “Always act as if everything is completely going to plan” is something we teach men, too.

Be Attractive

Now that we've covered what you should *think*, let's take a look at what you can *do*. We'll start with five basic attraction

5. Elliot Aronson and Judson Mills, “The Effect of Severity of Initiation on Liking for a Group,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 59, no. 2 (September 1959). See also J. Alessandri, J.-C. Darcheville, and T. R. Zentall, “Cognitive Dissonance in Children: Justification of Effort or Contrast?” *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 15, no. 3 (June 2008).

techniques that will generally make a man feel more attracted to you, listed here from most to least subtle.

Smile

You're more appealing when you smile. But don't just plaster one on. Like any reward—and your smile *is* a reward when a man is talking to you—it has more value when earned. Smile at him once or twice to get him to approach you if you want, and reward him with a smile when he does, even if you don't think you'll be interested in him—remember that other people are watching, too. But those are the only freebies he should get; afterward, lose your smile for behavior you don't like and reward him with it for behavior you do like.

Laugh

Laughter is a very primal communication tool. Humans have been laughing since before we even had jokes to tell each other; it even predates language.⁶ Other social species like dogs, rats, and monkeys use a form of laughter as well. It is a powerful social glue. To laugh with someone is to bond with them. So laugh with him.

If a man at least tries to have a sense of humor, laughter becomes a very easy tool for a woman to use.⁷ *You* don't have to be a stand-up comedian or even say anything funny at all.

6. Alan Partington, *The Linguistics of Laughter: A Corpus-Assisted Study of Laughter-Talk* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

7. If he's devoid of humor and any effort to acquire it, then this attraction technique won't work very well. But in that case, he's probably going to need a lot more help attracting you than you will in attracting him. If you insist on flirting with Mr. Unfunny, use any of the other four attraction techniques in this section.

It's great if you happen to have a good sense of humor and can make him laugh, but that's an added bonus and not what we're talking about here. Humor is kind of like sex. A man isn't necessarily looking for a woman who is funny as much as he's looking for a woman who thinks *he's* funny. While this doesn't say much about the strength of the male ego, it does make attracting him easier for you. Laugh with him when you can, though not to the point where it might seem insincere, undeserved, or try-hard.

A man isn't necessarily looking for a woman who is funny as much as he's looking for a woman who thinks he's funny.

That said, hopefully you will find someone who genuinely does make you laugh. I would bet dollars to donuts that the amount of conflict in a relationship is inversely proportional to the amount of laughter.

Touch

Touching—appropriately—makes people remember you better and more positively. It's also a reward for the men you flirt with, so dish it out only when he earns it by doing something you like. The back of his hand, arm, or shoulder are good places to start.

When people flirt, they often do something I call “pinging” when they touch each other. I first noticed this at some early Love Systems bootcamps when it wasn't always possible to hear every word of a client's conversation during an approach. Watching the “physical conversation” instead, I noticed that when someone is attracted, he or she quickly responds to being touched by touching the other person. If you're interested in

me and I touch your elbow when making a point or telling you a joke, you're more likely to touch me back (ping me) soon after. As we've seen, nonverbal communication, including touching and pinging, has much more meaning than the actual dialogue most of the time, as it's more difficult to control.

If he touches you, be aware of the pinging game and how it works, and make your own decision on when to reward him with a ping back. Don't do it every time, no matter how attracted you are to him, and don't avoid it completely, unless you're not attracted to him at all.

Preen

Many men find it attractive when a woman plays with her hair, licks her lips, or reapplies lipstick. Any of these moves can be subtly sexual and enhance his interest in you. Don't overdo it, though—just a few times over the course of a night or a conversation is plenty, unless you're looking to take things in a physical direction right away.

If a man has already decided that he likes you and you want to sexualize the situation, put your hand on his thigh and be done with it. But if he *isn't* sure about you yet, he's much more likely to find himself drawn to you through subtle, "accidental" hints of sexuality, like the examples above, than he is to become suddenly interested in you because of a more blatant come-on. As we know, most men enjoy the idea that they are the pursuer, even if *you* know that you're actually the one who is pulling all the strings.

If you're confident in yourself and in your sexuality and want to be a bit more adventurous than just playing with your hair, but without being blatant, you might want to use the Wordless Eye Contact Seduction Stare (see box).

The Wordless Eye Contact Seduction Stare

If you've got preening down, try this on for size: when it's your turn to speak, hold eye contact and do something else—slowly. This action is best done in response to a question or a compliment. For example:

HIM: "You're really interesting" or "Where are you from?"

YOU: [Make and hold eye contact with a neutral facial expression or very slight smile; pause for two full seconds]

YOU: [Reach for your drink. Use controlled, though not overly slow, movements. Don't break eye contact.]

YOU: [Pull drink to your mouth using the same controlled movements and constant eye contact. Maintain eye contact, though there's no need for any extra flourishes here, like making your sip extra-sensual or provocative. If you've been doing everything properly so far, you're creating enough sexual tension as it is.]

This whole process should take at least five full seconds.

YOU: "Thank you" or "Boston" or some other very short statement to respond to whatever he said. Allow him to continue the conversation as normal.

You may need to practice this move a couple times before you're pulling it off perfectly. But once you've got it in your toolbox, use it on any man who interests you (at most twice to the same person, though once really ought to be enough). It's guaranteed to fluster and intrigue.

Compliment

At this point in your life, you've probably figured that there's a certain part of every man that influences a lot of his actions and even gets him in trouble sometimes. It can be large or it can be small; don't believe what he tells you until you've had the chance to learn for yourself. Regardless of its size, men usually like it to be stroked. But be gentle—it's often surprisingly sensitive.

I'm talking, of course, about his ego.

Complimenting a man to whom you're attracted is a fine art. If you don't know him well or at all, then your presence, attention, and interest in the conversation are compliments, as are the techniques I've already introduced in this section. You don't have to give him a single verbal compliment to encourage him or to show him that you're interested in him. In contrast, the right compliment to someone you *do* already know can be useful to getting him to think about you in a different way or to reexamine his relationship with you. One easy move is to personalize your compliments and feelings. For example, instead of saying "I had fun," say "I had fun *with you*" or "*You're* fun." Instead of "That's funny," you can say "*You're* funny."

Any compliments should be *earned*, be *specific*, and can, at your option, also be used to *guide* him in a particular direction. (These principles apply to dating and relationships—and actually to interpersonal relations generally—not just to initial attraction.) The best compliments hit all three dimensions.

- **Earned:** Compliment him for something you've genuinely observed about him. As a woman you probably know that nothing feels more insincere or makes you question another person more than an unearned compliment. I'm not talking about stuff like "You're pretty" on a day when you don't feel

good about yourself; I mean compliments that can't possibly be sincere, like when a man tells you that you have an amazing personality after knowing you for only a minute. How would he know, really?

- **Specific:** Keeping compliments specific makes them more meaningful, and will also help you keep them earned. If you like a man, don't just say "You're great"; think of what is great about him and tell him that. If you feel like he's great but you can't think of anything specific that is great about him other than his charm, that's a strong sign that you need to know more about this man before you let your emotions take over.

- **Guiding:** Compliments can also be given to encourage certain behaviors or personality traits. If you like old-school manners and appreciated how he stood up when you got up to use the bathroom, say: "You're a gentleman; I like that." You'll get more of that sort of behavior in the future. With guiding compliments, you can even break the rule that compliments must always be fully earned. For example, let's say you're out with a man who interests you, but you're concerned that he's angling for a one-night stand and that's not what you want. Compliment him for going slow, perhaps with something such as: "I like talking to you. You're not like those other guys who are just trying to get a girl in bed the first night; I feel like you're interested in us getting to know each other. I like that." End it with some kind of reward/touch, like your hand on his or even a kiss on the cheek. This will convey to him that you like him but that you're not down for sex on the first date. Doing so through a compliment is better than just saying, "I like you but I don't want to have sex tonight." You won't have embarrassed yourself if you misinterpreted his intentions, or embarrassed him if he had been misinterpreting yours.

Attraction Killers

In observing over a hundred thousand approaches, I've definitely noticed some things that are a definite turnoff for most men. Even Jesse—the client who announced he was “desperate” at the beginning of his bootcamp—left a conversation with a very attractive woman during our second infield night because he “just knew that she would be an absolute nightmare.” Most of the time, women have no idea what they did to kill the attraction.

One of the easiest ways for things to go south is to let the conversation approach or linger on the wrong topics, or at least the wrong topics for your initial conversation with someone:⁸

- **His problems.** If he brings up his problems when he meets you and talks to you, that's a bad sign. Regardless of how the topic came up, do not perpetuate it by playing therapist or problem solver. Doing so will suck the romantic and flirtatious energy out of the interaction.
- **Your problems.** For the same reason as above, but in reverse. If you put *him* into the therapist or problem-solver role, odds are that you'll lose your attraction for him.⁹ You also risk coming across as negative, depressed, and/or self-absorbed, which won't help your cause.
- **Former Boyfriends.** Even if he talks about his ex-girlfriend and even if he asks about your exes. It doesn't hurt to answer a

8. As such, most of these subjects are just as bad for the first date as they are for that first flirtatious conversation, so remember them when we cover dates in chapter 10.

9. This is one of the reasons why we teach men to change the subject if your life problems come up early in conversation: not because we want men to lack empathy but because those sorts of conversations seem to kill romantic tension—especially for the person whose problems are being discussed or solved.

few light and appropriate questions if you want to do so: how long you've been single; whether you are still friends or in contact; etc. But if you don't want to answer these—or any other ex-boyfriend questions—just tell him you don't like talking about your past relationships and even though you're broken up, you respect his privacy just as you'd like him to respect yours. This response serves the double duty of reassuring him that you're not gossipy and that dating you won't mean that a cast of thousands gets involved in every aspect of your relationship.

- **Cars.** Unless you meet him at an auto show or have otherwise established that you are a car enthusiast, bringing up cars may make him think you're hinting at the "What kind of car do you drive?" question. Many men have an irrational fear of gold diggers and anything implying that the car question is coming just feeds right into it. Besides, cars can't possibly be so important that you need to talk about them the first time you meet a man.

- **Too many questions about his job.** If he's passionate about his work, it's fine to let him talk about it if you're interested. But if he tells you that he works as a marketing executive for XYZ Corporation and your questions imply that you're trying to figure out where he ranks on the totem pole or how much money he makes, the gold digger alarms will go off. Even if you do happen to be genuinely interested in his work life and don't care about money, save it. If you have a connection, there will be plenty of time to learn about his career later.

- **Long-term life plans.** This is a tricky one. It's completely reasonable to want to learn a man's intentions and what he's

looking for; however, if you are specifically looking for a long-term committed relationship leading to marriage, be sensitive about how you discuss your goals early on. A man will understand the idea that you're looking for someone with whom you connect so well that marriage follows naturally from your relationship. But if you give off the perception that you're more interested in being married than you are in the man who would be your husband (translated into man-speak: you're shopping for a husband the same way you'd shop for a piece of furniture), he's not likely to be interested—even if he also wants to find someone to fall in love with and get married to.

- **Having children.** See above—just replace “being married” with “having children.” The same dynamics apply. Now, existing children are a different story—mention them whenever you like. He might not be interested anymore, but it's better you know that before you get any more invested in him. And no, it wouldn't be a moral failing on his part if he doesn't want to date someone who already has children; he has every right to make that decision for himself.

- **Too much about yourself.** People who talk about themselves a lot come across as selfish, self-absorbed, and lacking in social skills. If you get nervous around men whom you're interested in, pay extra attention to your choice of conversation topics—it's natural just to blurt out information about yourself. In general, don't volunteer too much information; it's better for him to ask questions, and it absolutely doesn't hurt for a woman to be a bit mysterious or to leave him wanting to know more.

- **Extended (nonhumorous) disagreement.** A disagreement doesn't have to be about anything serious or meaningful

to kill the romantic tension; it simply needs to go on for a while (at least a minute) and to be treated seriously, as opposed to with humor. Unless whatever you are disagreeing about is genuinely a deal-breaker for you, save the serious conversation for later on—even if you know he's wrong and can prove it in two minutes of Internet research on your phone.

BEING A CHALLENGE

People value what they have to work for, but not so much that they'll keep pursuing you even when it seems hopeless. It's important to make yourself just the right amount of a challenge—but how much depends on the man in question. If he seems a bit shy, earnest, or even slightly awkward, then probably just getting to this point in the conversation with you was difficult enough. Give him a chance to show you his good qualities before you think about making things harder for him. For a great-looking, charming, confident guy who gets a lot of attention, you can throw obstacles in his way every time he seems to be getting comfortable. If he embodies all of these qualities *and* is using a flirtatious, playful, or sexual tone with you, then you should throw obstacles in his way every time he even *thinks* of getting comfortable.¹⁰

Playing hard to get should be in every single woman's tool kit for a very simple reason: it works. However, some women feel that doing so is artificial or manipulative, and I suppose that there is some literal truth to that. I have had similar conversations with men when they ask me why they have to be the

10. Of course, being a challenge isn't just a technique to deepen his interest in you; it is also a natural by-product of the screening you should be doing with him. You will want to learn if he's really what you want and find out what it is that *he* wants; we'll cover this aspect of screening in the next chapter.

one to approach; if a woman is interested in him, why can't she just as easily approach him? Independent of the biological reasons why men approach and women screen, we're also dealing with social conventions.

Our world is full of conventions, many of which are much more arbitrary than this one, and they play an important signaling role. If I applied for a job, I'd wear a suit and tie unless told otherwise—not because I especially love the feeling of knotted silk around my neck, but because I'm expected to. I don't want potential employers to be distracted by trying to interpret my sartorial choices instead of focusing on how amazing I am, nor do I want them worried about what other conventions I don't know or care about. If I felt a strong hatred for suits, I might not wear one, just as if you have a really strong hatred for playing hard to get, you don't have to do so. But we'd take that path knowing that I'm going to get less choice in job offers and you're going to get less choice in men.

When executed properly, playing hard to get is a balancing act. You want to give a man enough encouragement to keep going, but not so much that he wonders if you're desperate or he misjudged you. This is true whether you're looking for a one-night stand, a long-term relationship, or anything in between. There are many different ways to be a challenge, and these can be grouped into two broad categories: passive and active.

Passive

You will almost always want to play hard to get, at least passively. Don't let him see how interested you are in him: it's not about doing anything specific; rather, it's about *not* doing things that you might otherwise. For example, wait for him

to ask for your phone number instead of offering it to him. I know that I've been advocating for you to give guys a chance who might seem a bit awkward on the initial approach, but there are limits. He's going to have to call you at some point, so he may as well figure out how to ask for your phone number. Besides, my point wasn't that you should date awkward men; it was that even very interesting men might appear awkward for the first few minutes. Once the two of you have settled into a normal conversation, you can't make as many excuses for him. If he's awkward twenty minutes in, then he's probably just an awkward person.

Another example: let's say your conversation with a guy gets interrupted for some reason, like your friend drags you to the bathroom for a few minutes. Don't re-initiate the conversation with him. You can smile, you can stand nearby, you can even walk past him, but let him pick up the ball. He approached you once; he can do it again.

To be clear, playing hard to get does *not* mean that you should never show him that you're interested—do any and all of the things we talked about in the previous section to attract and reward him when appropriate. The point here is that you shouldn't have to lift a finger to move things forward. That's his job.

I might make one exception to this rule if your logistics are particularly challenging. If you aren't certain you'll be seeing him anytime soon, you will need to balance playing hard to get with ensuring that he gets your phone number or has some other way to get in touch. This is really only an issue with a complete stranger; even a friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend can easily be tracked down. Nonetheless, the man in question will be facing the same issue: if he's interested in you, he has to get your phone number before either of you leaves.

Think of that as his problem for as long as you can, though if you've inadvertently played *too* hard to get and now one of you is about to leave, then you'd be forgiven for going up to him to say good-bye and that you enjoyed meeting him. If *that's* not enough bait for him to ask for your phone number, he probably doesn't want it.

Active

Actively playing hard to get means giving him mixed messages and deliberately putting obstacles in his path as he pursues you. With most men, you don't have to go this far. But for a certain class of guys—particularly men who are used to female attention—you may have to actively send him the kind of mixed messages that drives him absolutely crazy. Crazy for you, that is. Just as in my hypothetical job interview earlier, in which I would want to associate myself in the interviewer's mind with people who understand social conventions and can function within them, you want to remind this man of attractive women whom he has had to work for as opposed to the easily available (and equally as easily dismissable) women he didn't.

We've introduced one mixed-messages technique already (the Mixed Messages Special on page 139 in chapter 6), and we'll be introducing some more later when we talk about phone calls and dates. For now, let's look at some other ways you can apply this strategy during that initial meeting or conversation:

- Respond with a “not yet” to his attempts to advance the situation with you, at least at first. If he wants to dance: not yet, you're enjoying your drink. If he wants to go outside with

you where it's quieter: you don't want to leave your friends right now. If he wants your phone number: you don't really give that out right away; why don't you two get to know each other a bit better first? And so on. A *not yet* is very different from a *no* and is perfect for giving him the encouragement to keep going while warning him that he's going to have to work for your affection.

- Talk to other people. Don't let him spend too much one-on-one time with you too easily or for too long. Make him compete for your time and attention. Keep the mixed messages going; the sooner you plan to cut off the one-on-one time, the more affectionate or responsive you can be during it. Always leave on a high note, which will leave him wanting more.

- Leave and come back. Go to the bathroom at some point—again, ideally on a high note—after you're pretty sure he's interested. When you come back, get “distracted” by a friend or another man or some activity that happens to be near where you left him. Make him reinitiate the conversation with you. The difference between executing this one actively versus passively is that in the active scenario, you deliberately make a break in the conversation and you might let him see you talking to other men after. But talking only; remember, if he sees you touching another man or more, he'll likely lose attraction.

I'll tell you right now—you will lose some men by actively playing hard to get. Maybe Mr. Right met and was captivated by Rival Girl after you left him to go to the bathroom or to find your friends, or maybe something came up and he had to leave before he got your phone number, which you'd been

delaying giving to him. With practice, you will develop your intuition on exactly when, how, and how much to play hard to get. Although you'll inevitably lose a few along the way, you'll help a much greater number of equally high-value men solidify and deepen their attraction to you.

Keep in mind that a man may use similar techniques on you; many high-value men do so naturally, and it is also part of Love Systems training to flip the script and get you to chase him. Often in such situations, he'll flirt with other women to make you a bit jealous and more attracted. Normally, watching such a scene has a strong effect on women. But forewarned is forearmed—you can rob this technique of its power simply by ignoring it. If he has your phone number, he'll get in touch later if he's interested. If he doesn't have your phone number, give him that one last chance to get it when one of you is leaving.

ENDGAME

There are only three ways this initial conversation can end. You can leave together, which means anything from going to dinner with a man who started talking to you in line at the coffee shop (what we at Love Systems would call an “instant date”) to going home with someone for something physical. Or, you can finish the conversation not feeling interested in him anymore. Both of these possibilities are fairly straightforward, so let's turn our focus to that more nuanced middle ground here, in which you *are* interested in him and want to see him again, but you're not leaving with him.

As we've noted, you have a lot more flexibility in how you flirt with a man if he's part of your extended social circle, a coworker, a classmate, or someone else you can count

on seeing again without having to make much of a special effort.¹¹ You can flirt and be charming and play as hard to get as appropriate for a given man without having to worry about whether you're going to see him again. You know you will. You can end a conversation with such a man on a high note of your choosing—leaving him wanting more—without diluting the power of this move by having to make sure you give him another opportunity to get your phone number before either of you leave.

In contrast, if he's a stranger or someone whom you can't count on predictably running into, then the first meeting can be do-or-die. Ensuring that the two of you can see each other again is mostly his problem to figure out: he has to interest you enough to get your phone number or make plans with you. But it's still a balancing act for you because if you throw too many obstacles in his path, he may think you're not interested. And unlike a man who is in your extended social circle, you and he may never meet again. If you want to take out insurance against the risk when you meet a man who truly grabs your attention, you can try to connect yourself to his social circle. Befriend someone he is with (in order of desirability: another woman, a gay man, an attached straight male friend). Don't try to enlist them to help you—they will tell the friend straightaway and you'll feel like you're in junior high. Instead, make friends with the whole group, though with particular attention on the "safe friend." Through this person you can garner invitations to events where your crush will be or invite that person *and his or her friends* to something you and your

11. "Flexibility" here refers to the logistics around exchanging contact information and seeing each other again. I'm not trying to tell you that you have more *social* flexibility when flirting with people you know from work or through friends, etc., especially if these people are gossipy and/or judgmental.

friends are doing. If leveraging off his friends in this way isn't possible, then you may still be able to put yourself in his path again by listening to him talk about his lifestyle. Is he a regular at every First Friday art show downtown? Does he have season tickets to the symphony, opera, or local basketball team? Or wherever it is you just met him—does he come here often? When? Make such questions sound like a normal part of your conversation, not a checklist from *Stalking for Dummies*.

And a final note about phone numbers: regardless of the situation, if you give him your phone number, get his, too. It's not hard. After giving him your phone number, ask: "What's yours?" If he hesitates or doesn't give it to you, then he's almost certainly attached; no single man who is interested in you would do anything other than automatically give you his phone number if you ask for it.¹² You're not getting his phone number so you can call him or text first, but rather so that you know it's him calling when he does. That way you can decide whether and when to answer his calls (see chapter 10, "Dating," for more on this) and avoid that painfully awkward beginning of the first phone call in which he tries to remind you where you know him from. On that note, if you tend to meet a lot of men, save him in your phone in a way that you'll remember him, like "Jerry Lawyer" or "Mike Winebar Tall."

12. No, you can't use this as a test. An attached man may still give you his phone number.

Chapter Nine

Screening

Until now, we've been talking about men you are, or are not, interested in without really establishing what it is that you're looking for or how to tell if he fits your criteria. Complicating matters is that as we've seen, people often don't know what they really want or what they respond to. But that said, I'm pretty sure that you know the specifics and details about what you like in a man better than *I* do, so we'll use your criteria as a starting point and get to work on how to screen a man to see if he meets them.

We've already talked about some screening a little bit, though for the purpose of playing hard to get and showing him that you're a challenge. Such screening techniques are by necessity obvious and explicit, but they're not the only ones available to you; screening can also be subtle or based on observation. You should use both approaches to learn as much as possible about a man in whom you're interested.

Screening is most important if you're looking for someone to date or for a long-term relationship, but that doesn't mean you should disregard the process if you meet someone you're interested in hooking up with. For example, if he's in your extended social circle, ask him whether he's ever hooked up

with anyone you know. If he starts naming names, you know that you can't count on him to be tight-lipped. Discretion may or may not be important to you, but if it is, screen for it.

Make a list of five to ten things that you want to know about a man who may be interested in you. As long as you avoid the attraction killers we talked about earlier, you'll be fine. Are you open only to someone who is looking for a serious relationship? If so, add it to the list. Would you date only someone of your own religion? It's your list; you don't have to show it, explain it, or justify it to anyone. Did your ex-boyfriend drive you crazy watching sports all day to the point that you want the next guy you date, even casually, to not be a sports nut? Put this trait on the list, too. Or maybe you have simple deal-breakers. The first time Edward and his wife met, she asked him if he liked animals. He said, "No, except for dogs." That was good enough for her, as she had two Labradors she wouldn't have given up for any man. She later told him that she started asking that up front after forever discovering this incompatibility on the second or third date with other men.

This list only has value if you use it. If you've established five things you want in a potential love interest, make sure you find out whether a man passes these criteria. If you have trouble using your list or remembering what's on it when you're in the moment, send them to your phone as an e-mail or a text message, or save them there in a note. When you feel yourself becoming interested in a guy, check your phone to remind yourself of what you need to know.

When you ask screening questions, be sure to ask in a way that does not reveal the answer you're looking for. If you want a man with an active lifestyle, ask him what he did last

weekend or what he does for fun instead of asking whether he prefers to go out or sit around the house. If you're tired of mama's boys, ask him open-ended questions about his family. It's not that men will want to deceive you (though some will, of course) as much as that it's natural in social conversation to vibe and look for commonalities while minimizing conflict. In other words, when you set up a test, it's natural for the person you're testing to want to pass it.

SCREENING FOR PERSONAL QUALITIES

When it comes to screening men, you can be only as good as your criteria. There is almost no quality that can't be determined about someone by asking the right questions. It drives me crazy when I see people, especially women, repeating the same self-destructive patterns in their choice of partner when it is entirely preventable. Don't let wishful thinking obscure critical thinking. In particular, don't relax or change your criteria to help a man who you're attracted to pass your tests. You don't have to know that he's going to be a perfect boyfriend, but you should make sure that you're not missing evidence that clearly indicates that he would not be. Many women are under the impression that they can change or "fix" men who they're dating. We'll talk more about relationships in chapter 11, but for now know that if you go into a relationship with this mind-set, you're asking for trouble. Often a man *will* change when in a relationship, but the impetus has to come from him. No man wants his partner to think of him as a fixer-upper. When Samantha from *Sex and the City* described her new love interest in exactly these terms, Carrie reminded her: "Sweetheart, he's a man, not a brownstone."

The Instant Lie Detector Test

What about men who are outright deceptive? They say one thing but do another, leaving you feeling hurt, confused, or just annoyed. Wouldn't it be great if you could bring a lie detector test with you when you go out and meet men? A giant piece of equipment and a technician to operate it would be out of the question, so you'd need something invisible that you could use by yourself, without the other person knowing. How much would you pay for such a device? This isn't a rhetorical question. Write that number down on a certified check and send it to me, care of my publisher, at the address at the front of this book. Because I'm going to give you this exact tool, right now. All you need is your eyes. Police investigators use this technique all the time.¹ Here's how:

STEP 1: Ask a question that requires the other person to think and use his memory, such as what he had for lunch yesterday. It has to be a question that requires a detailed answer, not one that can be answered with a yes or no. Watch his eyes closely. They should move to his right (your left).² If his eye movements aren't noticeable, ask him something that requires his visual memory, like the color of the first house he remembers living in. His eyes should move more visibly up and to the right, making them easier to observe.

1. David Simon, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1991).

2. "To his right" includes down and to the right, up and to the right, or just straight right. For the purpose of this (simplified) lie detector test, the vertical position or movement of his eyes is irrelevant.

STEP 2: Ask a question that makes the other person think and use his imagination, like to picture an octopus driving a car, and then describe it to you. Make sure the question is purely imaginary; if you ask him to picture his dream house, he might access his memory to answer this question, remembering elements of houses that he's seen in the past that he likes. As above, stay away from yes/no questions.³ His eyes should move to the left (your right).

These steps establish a baseline for his normal eye movement. Some people's eyes don't behave as described above, and for some left-handed people, the eye movement directions are reversed. We do these first two steps to confirm that their eyes are behaving normally.

STEP 3: Ask him the question you really want answered. Again, ensure it's one that requires an extended answer, not one that can be answered with a simple yes or no. "What did you do last night?" is much better than "Did you cheat on me?" or "Are you lying?" Provided that you have established his baseline for normal eye movements, you can now interpret his answer based on what his eyes do. An honest answer will require his memory and so his eyes should go to his right. A constructed answer that uses his imagination—usually a lie—should move his eyes to the left.

3. With yes and no questions, you'll often (but not always) see a liar close his eyes briefly, for maybe half a second, before responding.

In addition, listen for indicators of dishonesty that might come from unusual patterns or changes in his speech. The below examples are all in response to the question: "Are you married?"

- He repeats the question being asked: "Am I married? No."
- He suddenly avoids using contractions: "No I am not."
- He adds unnecessary details: "I dated this woman for six years and we just broke up in the spring . . . I thought about proposing to her but in the end it just didn't work out."
- He implies an answer instead of giving one directly: "Wouldn't I have said something already if I were married?"
- He suddenly starts speaking more quickly.

Use your judgment. Even the most elaborate and professional polygraph technology is accurate less than 95 percent of the time and is not admissible in court for good reason. Your untrained self using much simpler techniques will fall short even of that. Remember that these are indicators, not proof.

SCREENING FOR RELATIONSHIP QUALITIES

In addition to screening his personal qualities, you're probably going to want to see if the two of you are looking for or are open to the same sort of relationship. A mismatch of expectations or goals usually occurs for one of two reasons.

The first possibility is that you were too passive or didn't do

enough of the right kind of screening. If you want a long-term relationship but spend your weekends wondering why the guy you hooked up with the night before hasn't called, then you only have yourself to blame. Ditto if every man you go on a date with acts all lovey-dovey and makes you feel suffocated, when you don't have time for a relationship or all you want is to get out there to meet people and have fun. In both situations, effective screening for relationship qualities could save you from disappointment and wasting your time.

That being said, it's okay, normal, and good to be open to different possibilities, depending on the person and your chemistry with him. Sometimes the best experiences and connections come from spontaneity and open-mindedness. Just make sure you're amenable because that's how you feel, not because a too-charming man led you there or because you didn't want to break a too-sweet guy's heart.

The second possibility is that what you think you want isn't what you actually want. In this case, your actions and especially your nonverbal communication speak for you, often contradicting what you're saying or thinking. This often happens if you let other people influence your goals. For example, my friend Donna used to beat herself up and feel bad about herself every few months or so when she went home with and hooked up with a guy she met. She felt that she was sabotaging her chances of getting into and enjoying a long-term relationship. But in reality, she had internalized so much judgment and guilt about sex from her family and others that she struggled to admit to herself that she liked the spontaneity and fun of the occasional hookup. Once she realized that she was open to a variety of possibilities, she was able to deal with men on *her* terms. Her solution was that men who got her going physically but might not be suitable for a relationship could be

screened for something physical, while men with more depth were screened for their relationship qualities.

Now let's talk about how to do it.

If You're Looking for a Long-Term Relationship

If you're screening for a long-term committed relationship, you're probably going to have to ignore some of your instincts. Many men looking for a long-term relationship will lack experience in approaching and attracting a complete stranger. Remember that most women decide whether a man is a "no" or a "maybe" within the first thirty to ninety seconds of meeting him. What type of man is great at breaking through social barriers, walking up to you (and whomever you're with), and making a great impression in the first thirty to ninety seconds? Someone who has done it before—many times. Most such men are *not* looking for a committed, monogamous relationship, so if this is your goal, give the men you meet a least a few minutes before you decide whether you'd like to know them better.

If you want to test a man's openness for a long-term relationship, wait until you've solidified his attraction to you and then hit him with a couple questions about his romantic history:⁴

- "Do you have a girlfriend?" / "Are you seeing anyone?"
- "When was your last relationship?"
- "How long did it last?"
- "Why did it end?"
- "Did you see other people?"

4. For clarification, asking him about his relationship is not one of the attraction killers mentioned in the previous chapter. *You* talking about *your* ex-boyfriends is an attraction killer; asking him a couple simple, focused questions about his relationship history is just good screening.

If he's interested in you and at least open to a committed relationship, he'll answer these questions. Doing so will at least give you a starting point for understanding his intentions based on whether he's had or pursued committed relationships in the recent past. If he hasn't, but now he's looking for something romantic and long-term, then he'll recognize the tenor of your questions and volunteer that his priorities have changed. Some men may give funny or ridiculous answers at first to the above (or to any) screening questions. This is not necessarily a bad sign, but if you ask for a piece of information a couple of times in a couple of different ways and still don't have a good understanding of his recent relationship history, well, that evasion tells you all you need to know.

Don't make excuses for him here. Too often, a woman gets so attracted to some aspects of a man's personality and/or looks and wants so badly for his other characteristics or relationship goals to fit her criteria that she ignores or twists evidence that they do not. Again, use critical thinking, not wishful thinking.

On the other hand, don't exclude men unnecessarily. Some women assume that because a man has hooked up with different women recently, he's not interested in or open to commitment, which is not necessarily true. Maybe his goals have changed, or maybe these other women weren't relationship material for him, or vice versa. Most men have higher standards for a potential girlfriend than they do for a potential hookup. His history may be cause for skepticism but not dismissal.

Similarly, just because a man tries to make something happen with you physically does not mean that he's not interested in you romantically. Typically, a man who is thinking of you as potential girlfriend material will be very interested in getting your contact information and/or arranging a date. But if he's that interested in you, it would be natural—at least for some

men—to also want to make out with you, or more. (You'd like your future boyfriend to be physically attracted to you, right?) Maybe he's a less judgmental and sexist man than most and won't exclude you as a potential girlfriend just because you hooked up with him early on. Such men are not necessarily the norm, but sometimes relationships *do* start with an early burst of physical passion. So even if you do fall into bed with him early on, he's not necessarily a lost cause. That said, if he's truly interested in you, he'll respect your limits.

If You're Looking for Casual Dating

Maybe you're not looking for a boyfriend right now, but you still enjoy dating and spending time with men you find interesting. Screening for such men is a bit different from screening for a potential boyfriend. Your perfect long-term match may need to be an outdoorsy guy, lest he be bored every summer when you want to go camping, but that may not be an important factor when screening for a fun guy to date. You may think a bit of awkwardness can be cute or even charming in a potential boyfriend but may make him too inhibited for someone to date casually.

If you're looking for casual dating, you can also break the general rule of not letting him see you flirting with other men. In this situation, a *small* amount of flirting will send him a few good messages (and set expectations) for a casual dating relationship:

- You're not the kind of woman who is going to wait by the phone for him to call.
- Just because he gets your phone number or asks you out doesn't mean that you're going to avoid other men.
- He has to be at his best to sustain your interest and attention.

If You're Looking to Hook Up

Screening for a hookup is easy; you should be able to completely and unquestioningly trust your instincts in this area. If you get the feeling that you'd enjoy getting physical with someone you met, then you probably will.

Setting expectations here is also relatively straightforward. Be physical, touchy, make sexual conversation and innuendo. Focus your compliments on his physical features (ideally ones below the neck, though lips work, too—complimenting his eyes or hair is more ambiguous) or tell him you enjoy his confidence or sexiness. Ask him what he's doing "later." If that doesn't give him the hint, little else will.

If he's doing these things, too, he may also be trying to hook up. This is particularly likely to be true if early in the conversation he seems very interested in your logistics—who you came with, how you all got here, where you live, and so on. If you know what to look for, you can almost see the gears spinning in his head trying to figure out exactly where and when the two of you could theoretically have sex. You can give him honest answers, or, if you want, you can test him. Create a situation that would be logistically unsuitable—for example, if he meets you at a nightclub, tell him that you're the designated driver and have to drive all of your friends home at the end of the night out in some distant suburb, before having to get up at six tomorrow morning. If he's still talking to you five minutes later, it *probably* means he's open to more than just casual sex with you.

Chapter Ten

Dating

Once you and a man you like have met and gotten to know each other, the next step is usually a date. A date is any time you and a potential romantic and/or sexual partner plan to see each other—it doesn't have to be called a date and it doesn't have to be just the two of you alone. We'll be looking at dating from two separate angles: the dates themselves; and all the phone and other communications that take place before the first one and in between all the others. Let's start with the latter, since that comes first in the process. He has to get in touch with you to set up the first date, right?

PHONE AND TEXT

Let's say you met a great guy, had a wonderful conversation with him, and gave him your phone number. What do you do now?

Absolutely nothing.

If he's genuinely interested in you, he'll make the next move. I understand that waiting can feel frustrating or disempowering,

but we're once again dealing with social conventions and powerful associations here. As discussed, most men feel that the women who have been worth their time are mostly those who have hung back; women who explicitly pursued them after the first meeting tend to be more desperate and/or less desirable. That characterization may not apply to you personally, but he may not take the time to find that out based on the impression you give. Our brains look for patterns and use these to simplify decisions. If the last ten women he met who called first didn't turn out to be what he was looking for, he's not likely to invest much time or energy into any woman who does so in the future.

Of course, this can lead to a bit of a catch-22. If he doesn't get in touch with you after you meet, he's probably not all that interested. If you pursue him, he's likely to become even less interested and nothing will happen with him. But if you don't pursue him, you probably won't see him again, anyway, and still nothing will happen with him. So you're probably thinking, why not take a shot? The situation is similar to what men face when a woman doesn't pick up or return his call. He can try again a couple of times, but it soon turns into a no-win situation. In fact, this situation can occur even when the woman was genuinely interested in him at first but bad timing has led to a few missed and unreturned calls. If the man keeps pursuing, she may question why he's trying so hard, but if he doesn't she forgets him. This scenario is one of the reasons why we encourage men, especially younger men, to text first instead of phoning. Texts are less intrusive and easier to respond to, thus creating positive emotional momentum early on.

Texting vs. Phone Calls

Many women have asked me what it means when a man texts instead of calls, or vice versa. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the answer is “probably nothing.” Sure, at the margin, a phone call requires more effort and investment, but phone calls are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to indicate that a man is serious about pursuing you. A man’s choice of whether to text or call you depends far more on his own preferences, what he’s heard is the “right” thing for him to do to maximize his chances with you, or even what kind of day he is having, *far* more than it has to do with how he feels about you.

As an example, I text constantly and almost never answer the phone; in fact, my outgoing voice-mail message tells callers to hang up and text me. But if I’m on a long drive somewhere and can’t text, I might make some phone calls. Fellow Love Systems instructor Chris Shepherd¹ usually follows up with a woman by phone, but if he’s busy or his battery is low or he’s getting bad reception, he’ll text. How invested either of us are in a given woman or what our intentions are toward her don’t even enter the picture. I assure you, I’ve never heard a man say: “Karen is girlfriend material, so I’m going to call her instead of texting.”

By the way, when I say “do nothing,” I mean do nothing to make him feel like you are specifically trying to initiate contact. Don’t call him, don’t text him, don’t add him or message

1. Aka “Tenmagnet.”

him on Facebook, and so on. You can respond to anything he initiates, of course, and we're about to cover that. You don't have to skip class or call in sick to avoid him or stop doing whatever you'd normally do. If it wouldn't be obvious to him, you can even show up somewhere where you think he'll be. Just be subtle; as discussed, you're almost always better off accomplishing your relationship goals without *appearing* to be trying.²

If after a week there's been no contact and you're not likely to run into him anytime soon any other way, then get in touch with him if you want. It's not likely to make a difference—if he was into you, he would have gotten in touch—but at least you won't be sabotaging anything that has possibilities. And who knows? Maybe this is actually one of those very rare situations where he genuinely did lose his phone or didn't save your number properly.

There's an art to getting back in touch like this. Don't simply call or text to say hi to him, and definitely don't put him on the defensive (for example, "I thought I would have heard from you..."). Act like nothing unusual is happening, and casually invite him to join you and your friends at something you're doing anyway. For example, if you met him at X Bar and are going back there in a couple weeks, you can text him "We're going to X Bar again on Friday, hope to run into you there!" This inviting him along to something you're doing

2. Yes, this could be considered to be sexist. It's not surprising that a society that has not entirely purged itself of sexism may have produced some social conventions that themselves are sexist. That said, not all gender-based social conventions work against you. Would you really always want to be responsible for approaching and breaking the ice, for example? (See the chapter 6 box "Why Approach Anxiety?")

anyway is a special kind of date that puts all the social power back in your hands—we'll get to that in a minute.

Normally, you won't have to take such measures. He'll get in touch with you. Before you and he have had an actual date, he should initiate all communication. After the first date, and especially after it's established that you're probably going to see each other or go out again, then you have more flexibility. You can call or text him out of the blue, but don't do so often. Most important, don't do this only when he goes an unusual length of time between calls or texts to you; if he notices the pattern (and smart men will), that tells him that you're only *trying* to play hard to get, which strips that technique of all of its power.

Here are a few simple rules for phoning or texting him. These rules are simple by design, as many women overthink these questions:

- Don't answer the phone every time he calls. Some people like to give formulas for all of this, like to answer the phone only half of the time when he calls, or two out of every three calls, or whatever. I think that's overly prescriptive. The right balance depends on you, him, and the situation. For example, the percentage of calls you should miss will be much higher if he calls you every day rather than once per week. As long as you're working with the basic principle of not being too available to him, you'll be fine.
- Return missed phone calls only once in a while. Wait a day or two to see if he calls you again first.
- End most but not all conversations first. It can be very obvious to most men if you do this systematically.

- Take at least as long to reply to his texts as he does to reply to yours.
- Don't invest more than he does. Avoid sending a long five-part message in response to a short text from him.
- Don't send two texts in a row. Wait for him to contact you before messaging him again.
- Ignore any of the above tips if and when they conflict with common sense. If you have plans with him at 8 p.m. and he calls you at 6 p.m., answer the phone. He is probably calling to confirm, to get directions, or for some other reason relating to your date. The rules above are meant to be guidelines, not a straitjacket.

Once you've got the above fundamentals down, there's one more technique you can use with devastating effectiveness: the less time you give him, the friendlier and more effusive you can be. In an early "get to know you" conversation, you might give him ten or fifteen minutes on the phone—that shows enough interest in itself. After you've talked a few times and have ideally been out on at least one date, you can vary how you handle phone calls. If you're going to cut him off after five minutes, you can spend those five minutes gushing over how glad you are that he called and how much fun you had with him. Or even answer the phone with something like "Oh my gosh, Paul, I'm so glad you called, I was just thinking of you, but I'm actually in the middle of something—can I call you back?" After that, you wait a couple of days before calling him back. If he doesn't spend the intervening forty-eight hours thinking about you, he's not human.

The more confident and socially skilled he is, the less you should show him that you're interested—especially if you want him to consider you as a potential girlfriend rather than as a hook-up partner. Show him that his looks or charm or whatever he has going for him isn't enough by itself; he has to get to know you and work for your interest. In contrast, if you're kind of a shy girl next door and a really sweet man asks you out (even if it's somewhat awkwardly), you'll still want to miss a few of his calls and texts and so on, but not nearly as much as with Mr. Popular.

Finally, communication from men is only a good thing if it seems to be leading somewhere. Men who meet you and are willing to get into an endless series of flirty text conversations without even hinting at plans for a date probably don't see you as a potential girlfriend—at least not yet.

ON THE DATE

So he's asked you out—but on what kind of date? I don't mean whether he suggested Italian or French food, or a movie instead of a concert. I mean what are the date's logistics? Popular culture assumes that a *real* date involves him picking you up on Saturday night and taking you to dinner. Some dates work that way, but many don't—especially today. And the difference matters, as different kinds of dates are likely to lead to very different outcomes. To get a handle on this we'll go through the “Four Ws” of dating: Who (is going to be there)? When (are you going out)? Where (are you going)? What (are you going to be doing)?

Who?

You may be asking yourself what I could possibly mean by this question. A date involves two people, right? Normally, yes.

What No (Other) Man Will Tell You about Getting a Boyfriend

If you want a long-term, committed relationship with one man, you should be dating multiple men. If you don't know any other potential dating partners, then that's a signal that you should get out there more. If you are only going on dates and flirting with one man, it's very easy to come across as needy or more focused on him earlier than you necessarily should—and possibly earlier than you really want to. You know from men who have been overeager with you in the past that such behavior isn't attractive.

Why do people sometimes show too much interest when they're pursuing only one person? It's natural to have moments when you want to be with someone, or when you feel lonely, or want to flirt, or when you just happen to feel happy and affectionate. These emotions have many possible triggers, including normal mood swings or hormonal shifts. Most of the time, the emotions won't come from a guy whom you've been on just a couple of dates with, but if he's the only man in your life in an ongoing romantic context, it's easy to subconsciously apply those feelings to him. At least some of the experiences that you've had with overeager men probably stemmed from your being the only woman he was dating or getting any attention from.

Besides, the dating process is kind of like interviewing potential boyfriends. You wouldn't interview just one candidate for even the most menial job, so why would you restrict yourself when choosing a potential life partner? Consider several options and give yourself a basis for comparison.

*If you want a long-term,
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But more casual dates come up, too. Maybe he says he is going somewhere and invites you to drop by, for example, going to a concert, hanging out in a bar, having a picnic in the park, or shopping at the mall. These

kinds of dates are more common with younger men, especially in college towns or big cities, and they need special attention before we go any further. They usually tilt the social power *away* from the person who is “dropping by” and *toward* the person who invited him or her. Let’s assume he’s the inviter and you’re the invitee. Whatever it is that he is inviting you to, you can assume two things: he will have something else to do there, and he will have other people there. You’ll be competing for his attention—not necessarily with other women, but competing all the same.

You may think, *So what?* or *I’d just talk to his friends, too*, or *I wouldn’t compete for his time; I’d just find other ways to amuse myself*. And you may be right, which would make you an exception compared to other people. But what we’re talking about is a very powerful Love Systems dating technique that can significantly change the playing field on a date. When a woman is competing for a man’s attention, she will usually become more attracted to him—all the more so when he is comfortable and familiar with the environment (he chose it, after all) and you aren’t. Consider TV shows like *The Bachelor*. You put twenty or so women in a house with one man and limited contact with the outside world. What happens? They compete for him. Sure, these shows are artificially constructed and the contestants have their own motivations, but it’s truly striking how focused these women become on getting

the man's attention and interest. If you put these same twenty women with the same bachelor in a busy nightclub, I wonder how many of them would gravitate to this specific bachelor in the absence of direct competition.

Now, just because a man suggests such a date does not necessarily mean that he is trying to manipulate you. He's probably not. Maybe he's genuinely excited about the activity and isn't even thinking about its psychological dynamics. Or maybe the two of you haven't really gotten to know each other very well yet, and he thinks that the scenario would make for a low-pressure way for the two of you to spend more time together and see how things go. Or possibly his schedule is so busy right now that this kind of a date is the only way to see you soon. Of course, he'd have to prove that he's going to make time for you if things continue, but for a first date, there's no reason to be offended. Actually, there would never be a reason to be offended; if he's already been out with you and spent time with you and he still invites you to hang out with him and his friends, that means he likes you and wants to show you off. Take that as a compliment, and *then* tell him when you want some one-on-one time.

In any case, the point remains that the kind of dates we're talking about will still normally leave him with a lot more power and you competing for his attention. So what should you do? If you're confident that he'll ask you out again in the future, you can choose to interpret this kind of offer as his being busy, and suggest that he call you when his schedule frees up a bit. But it's probably okay to go on this date anyway if you like the guy and the activity he's inviting you to sounds fun. The very fact that you understand the psychological dynamics of the situation means that they will have much less influence on you. You can also defuse the power dynamics

by bringing a couple of friends with you as well—even including a platonic male friend, if you like. (Be absolutely *sure* that he said that his friends will be there before you do this. You will feel a bit silly showing up with an entourage for what he thinks is a one-on-one date.)

Of course, you can just as easily offer the same sort of date in reverse. When a man asks you out, you can say that you're busy then but suggest that *he* drop by such-and-such place on such-and-such a date. These dates are good if you want to keep a lot of flexibility, and they are especially valuable for a first date with a guy you might have met online or after one too many tequilas. If you're not feeling it with him, you have a much easier out than faking an urgent phone call from a friend. It's also a good scenario if you don't want to hook up with this guy on the first date and you don't trust yourself not to. Your friends can act as a brake on the situation—though, as we'll soon discuss, there are other ways to accomplish this same goal. One more reason for this sort of date: if you think that you are more attracted to him than he is to you. The playing field will be more level, and it will be much harder for you to come across as needy or too into him. It's difficult for a guy to impress you when he's competing for your attention and you're on your own home turf, so if you come out of a date like that wanting to see him again, then he's got a certain charm to him or a certain connection with you.

Earlier, I suggested offering this sort of a date if a man hasn't been contacting you. In such a scenario, this message conveys to him that you're still interested in him or open to the possibilities, but that if he wants you, he's still going to have to chase you and you're not going to throw yourself at him.

Of course the "standard" or "default" date will involve only you and him, and the purpose of the date is for the two of

you to get to know each other. Sure, if he takes you to his favorite restaurant he might greet the doorman by name, or if you happen to see someone you know there may be a side conversation or two, but the focus should be on the two of you getting to know each other.

When?

Social convention, at least in the Western world, makes Saturday night the most important date night of the week, with Friday the next most important, then Thursday, and so on back to Monday. (Sunday seems to hold an ambiguous status due to it also being a weekend.)

First dates are often during the week. That said, he may suggest (and you may agree to) a first date on a Friday or Saturday if that's the only time that works with both of your schedules, if you've already spent a lot of time getting to know each other (for example, three hours at a mutual friend's dinner party versus twenty minutes at happy hour), or if there is a specific event taking place that you're both interested in, like a concert. There is a little bit of a signaling effect that comes from the choice of date night. If a man suggests taking you out on Saturday night, he's putting some importance on the date. If you accept his offer, you're telling him that he's earned a Saturday. Keep this in mind as plans are made.

Sometimes you will want to reschedule his initial date offer. Some women do so routinely and as a matter of course to make the man chase a bit, while others genuinely have other plans at the time the man suggested a date. If you do suggest a different date, ensure that the new date is for a less important night than the original offer. If he invites you out on a Wednesday night, but you're busy then, don't come back

offering Saturday. Don't discuss these dynamics explicitly with him; just use them to make good dating decisions.

For the second and subsequent dates, you don't have to worry about choice of date night as much; the two of you want to see each other again, so it's mostly a matter of aligning your schedules. That being said, if he *never* suggests seeing you on the weekend, it could mean that he's attached or doesn't value you very highly. After a few dates, you would likely know about most other possible explanations—for example, he works weekends or has custody of his children then.

Of course, not all dates are at night. He may invite you out for lunch, shopping, or hanging out in the park. The signal from a daytime date is that he *probably* doesn't have sex on his mind, though that doesn't necessarily mean that he'd turn it down if it's offered or available. Other than that, there's not much to interpret about a man who suggests a daytime date, except perhaps that he's likely to be an active guy who doesn't sit around the house on weekends (when most daytime dates necessarily take place). There's no reason at all to feel offended or devalued, but as was the case with the weekend/weeknight dynamic, if he *never* invites you out at night, it's reasonable for you to wonder what he is, in fact, doing with his evenings.

Where?

Depending on where you both live, the actual logistics of the date can have a big role in how it plays out. Consider two nearly identical scenarios. In one, the date started when you both met up at a coffee shop somewhere. In the other, the date started when he came to pick you up or you drove to his place and then you went together to the coffee shop. By that difference

alone, which date is more likely to last longer and get more physical? The latter—because of how the logistics are set.

(Of course, many dates aren't going to involve cars, especially if the two of you live near each other or in cities where it's more common to walk or take public transit or taxis. But cars may be involved in at least some of the dates you go on, so the logistical dynamics associated with them are worth discussing. Plus, some of these dynamics can sometimes come up without cars anyway.)

If the date starts with him driving to your place to pick you up or your driving to his, then it must end with one of you at the other's house. Either he drives you back home or he takes you back to his place, where your car is. From there, it's not unnatural to come in, get a drink of water, use the bathroom, etc., and then all of a sudden your date goes into overtime. Point being, at the end of the date, you're together in a place where something physical can happen. Even without cars, the same dynamic can be created if your date, for example, is at night and he walks you home afterward.

Clearly, people do hook up after dates that *don't* begin at either person's house. But it can be awkward to suggest going home with someone and many people, especially women, prefer for the seduction process to appear spontaneous. In the coffee shop example above, it's much more natural for a man to say (and for a woman to agree to), "I'll drive you home," than it is for him to say, "I know I live twenty minutes in the other direction from your house, but how about we each take our separate cars, driving them separately, to come back to my place to . . . ummm . . . see my etchings?" Or to get into the same taxi even if you live in opposite directions, or even to give the driver one destination address instead of two.

Obviously, it's up to you whether you choose to get physical on a date, regardless of the logistics. But if you don't want to hook up on this date and you either don't trust yourself to hold the line and/or you don't want to deal with the awkwardness of deferring his physical advances, you may find that using logistics helps you. In the above example, you'd want the date set up such that you meet up with him somewhere and there would be no reason for him to come back to your place or you to his. Similarly, if you want to encourage the possibility that the two of you will hook up—without being forward or him even knowing what you're doing—you can tip the logistics in your favor. If he suggests meeting at the restaurant, you can tell him that your car is acting up or that you'll be in his area anyway or something similar, and ask if you can go together.³

Many factors go into how a man plans a date, and few men are consciously aware of these implications. It's usually the wrong move to infer anything about a man's intentions from the logistical nature of the dates he suggests.

What?

Aside from how the date is organized, there's also the question of exactly what you are going to do. Some activities are more likely to lead to more attraction than others. Such dates usually include some external form of entertainment—especially when that entertainment gets you laughing, happy,

3. Saying that you don't know where the restaurant is or how to get there won't help; he'll just give you directions. The only thing that you will have accomplished is to tell him that you were unable or unwilling to look up the restaurant online. The technical term in man-speak for such a woman is "helpless princess." It's not a compliment.

or affectionate—but doesn't cut off contact between you. Comedy clubs are a classic example. The show should get both of you laughing together and having fun, and we know how laughing together can make people feel closer to each other. Unlike, say, a movie, a comedy show should spark interaction among the two of you between acts. But unlike a coffee or dinner date, your interaction isn't the only or dominant form of entertainment; the comedians onstage take care of that. Concerts or improv theatre can have similar dynamics.

Additionally, the more different activities you and he do on the date and the more different places you go with him, the more likely the two of you are to feel more attracted to each other. We could have the exact same conversation over four hours in a restaurant as we could have if we spent those four hours divided among a number of places. But in the latter case, our brains will interpret all the different activities we've done together and all the different settings in which we've spent time together as us knowing each other better and longer than we actually do.

Very few men are conscious of the information I've presented here, so it can't be usefully used to infer anything about his intentions with you. But if you feel surprisingly attracted to or close to someone you've just been on a date with, the above may provide reasons why. On the flip side, if you're very interested in the man you're going on a date with, you can try to incorporate some of the above elements into the date—leaving *him* wondering why he still can't get you out of his mind the next day.

Who Pays?

One tactical issue that we haven't treated yet concerns money. I am often asked—by both male and female clients—who should pay for what on the date. Here are some simple rules:

- You're never under any obligation to pay for anything on a first or second date if he made the plans. A man who explicitly asks you to pay for something—without your offering—is being rude. If he can't afford to take you to the fancy restaurant, he should have suggested a drink or a picnic at the park instead.
- You're never under any obligation to pay for anything—at any time—if you weren't involved in the decision. If he orders a bottle of champagne at the bar, you should thank him and appreciate his generosity, but you're not obligated to split the bill.
- If you don't want to risk being seen as a gold digger, avoid suggesting plans that will cost a lot of money if you're not planning to make a sincere offer to pay half.
- If you like him, and he's already been spending money on your date, then your paying for something small tells him that (a) you're not a princess, (b) you like him, and (c) you can handle yourself. If he takes you to a concert, for example, buy the first round of drinks when you get there. Buy 100 percent of something small, like a round of drinks, as opposed to trying to split a larger bill, like dinner. Doing the latter may convey to some men

that you're downgrading the night from "date" to "friends getting together," if he's got it in *his* mind that men pay for dates and friends split the bill.

- Any man who thinks that the amount of money he spent on the date should influence your behavior (and, in particular, whether you have sex with him) beyond gratitude and appreciation is a man whom you should never see again and whom you should warn your friends about.
- After a few dates, it's reasonable for you to contribute to the date beyond a token amount, or at least to make a genuine attempt to pick up the tab some of the time, if you have the means to do so. He may insist on paying for everything anyway, but he'll appreciate a sincere effort to contribute.
- If you invite him somewhere, assume that you'll be picking up half of the bill.
- As always, ignore any of the above rules when they conflict with common sense and your unique situation. If he's superrich and you're living paycheck to paycheck, there's only so much you'll be able to contribute. If you've got money but he just spent his entire paycheck on concert tickets to take you to see your favorite band, get him something nice afterward.

Most of the time, money issues on dates aren't about the money specifically as much as the message that different attitudes about money can send. Whether or not a man can easily afford all the top-shelf drinks a woman orders on the first date is immaterial; he's still going to think she's a gold

digger who doesn't respect him when the tab comes and she acts as though the bill has as little relevance to her as the price of tea in China. But if you take care of the valet after dinner, the five dollars your date saves isn't going to make much of a difference—but the message that you respect and appreciate him and his generosity will.

HAVING “THE TALK”

Whatever your initial goals in dating someone—a long-term relationship, casual dating, or friends with benefits—it's good to reexamine your feelings once in a while and reconfirm or revise as necessary. Maybe you were seeing wedding bells the first time you met someone, and now you think he's fun to hang out with, but not someone you could see yourself committing to. Or maybe you discover some qualities about a man you'd only been seeing very casually that make you think that your relationship with him could be deeper. And so on.

You'll also want to make sure that you and he are on the same page. For casual dating or for friends with benefits, refer back to chapter 9 and set expectations. If a man oversteps some boundaries (for example, a friend with benefits starts sending you flowers), you may have to remind him that you're not looking for a love connection with him right now (or ever, as the case may be), but otherwise you should be in good shape.

Committed, long-term, monogamous relationships are different.⁴ How do you know you're in such a relationship?

4. For simplicity, I am assuming that the long-term, committed relationship that you want is also a monogamous one. This isn't because I believe that monogamy is a necessary component of a long-term, committed relationship (I don't), but because

Because you and he have had “the talk”: an explicit conversation in which you both agreed that you are, in fact, together. This is pretty much the only sure way to know that both of you see the relationship in the same way. Never assume. I will accept as a reasonable substitute his always introducing you as his girlfriend, or, for that matter, a ring on your finger. But that’s all.

My former client Peter told me about a woman he’d been on four dates with over the course of a month. Things were heating up emotionally, and they’d started having sex on the second date, but they’d never discussed where their situation was going. One night, she saw him out with an attractive woman and went ballistic, and they had such a screaming match that neither wanted to talk to the other again. This was unfortunate, since Peter was genuinely getting to the point where he wanted to commit to her and not date other women. But because she had insisted on making unjustified assumptions, the connection they shared was lost.

Situations like Peter’s are surprisingly common. Tellingly, they only seem to come up when the assumption coincides with a woman’s own desires; some women who assume that they are in a relationship do so because they *want* to be in a relationship. That’s all well and good, but one can’t assume a feeling and just expect it to stick.

When I’m giving talks to groups of women or working with female clients, I often get lots of questions about potential

monogamy is most people’s default expectation for such relationships. It’s reasonable to assume that a man who says he wants you to be his girlfriend is implying monogamy unless he explicitly says otherwise. Similarly, if you’re looking for a nontraditional relationship—open, polyamorous, whatever—it’s on *you* to disclose that fairly early on in the dating process.

exceptions to the rule of “If you haven’t talked about it, you’re not in a relationship.” Some of the more common scenarios:

- Having sex doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- Hanging out every weekend doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- Meeting his parents doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- Going as his date to one or more big events (weddings, for example) doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- Your friends saying you make a great couple doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- His friends saying you make a great couple doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- His telling you how much he adores you or even loves you doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- One or more of his friends (or your friends) referring to him as your boyfriend or you as his girlfriend doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.
- [Fill in the blank here] doesn’t mean you’re in a relationship.

Again, the only true indication that you’re in a relationship is that you and he have had an explicit conversation about it.⁵

In general, the stereotype is true that women tend to value committed monogamous relationships more than men do, and they tend to hit the relationship stage of the dating process earlier than men do. There are good evolutionary/biological reasons for this. A woman can be pregnant by only one man at a

5. For clarity: obviously many couples are in relationships and have never had this conversation. I’m not saying that “the talk” is the only way to get into a relationship; I’m saying that it’s the only way to be *sure* that you’re in a relationship. It’s a topic on which you should seek clarity.

time, so her interest is in having him stay with her to protect her and provide resources. She doesn't gain anything (evolutionarily) by having the freedom to be with other men. Even after she gives birth, she knows that she will have a lot more trouble attracting a protector/provider to help raise another man's child, since that would be an evolutionary dead end for a man. In contrast, a man has a biological incentive to spread his seed widely, because he can pass on his genes through multiple women simultaneously.

Obviously, this sentiment doesn't apply to all women—it doesn't even apply to all women who say that it *does* apply to them, since some of these women are responding to societal expectations as opposed to their own desires. Regardless, the upshot of this dynamic is that if a man has had a reasonable amount of dating experience, he's probably been on the receiving end of women pushing for a relationship in the past. He probably has negative associations with being pushed and with women who push. Be subtle.

Some women justify pushing on the basis that the man should be flattered that she wants to be with him. If you're one of these women and you still think this way well into the tenth chapter of this book, then I've probably failed at my job. The world we live in is not one of *should bes* and *it would be nicer ifs*. What most men *actually* think when a woman is pushy is that you're more interested in having a boyfriend than in being with him specifically.

Of course, this reaction is often a misunderstanding of a woman's feelings or intent—and maybe a man *should* be flattered that a woman feels strongly that he should be her boyfriend. But don't count on it. No matter how justified you may feel in pushing him to a commitment before he is ready,

Happy, long-term, committed, monogamous, romantic relationships happen when both people value their relationship with each other more than they value their independence.

it's usually not worth it. You'll almost certainly be setting yourself up for disappointment—possibly infidelity, certainly resentment. Happy, long-term, committed, monogamous, romantic relationships happen when both people value their relationship with each other more than they value their independence. Or, to flip that per-

spective: he's only going to make a real, genuine commitment to you when he's more afraid of losing you than he is of losing his freedom (and vice versa).

Imagine you have a friend who really likes to spend time with you—more time than you really want to devote to her. What would be your friend's best strategy to spend more time with you? Should she:

- (a) nag you and bug you and tell you you're being a bad friend, or
- (b) make being with her so great that you want to spend as much time with her as she does with you?

Obviously, romantic relationships have different dynamics than friendships, but this analogy should convey the futility of trying to argue or guilt someone into being closer with you.

Similarly, but perhaps less obviously, don't just start deepening the relationship without talking to him about it first. The classic example here is the woman who brings over half of her closet and/or medicine cabinet to his place. It's *his* place. He *will* notice. And he won't think it's flattering; all you'll have

accomplished is telling him that you're the kind of woman who does what she wants on her own timetable and doesn't care how other people feel. It didn't work for Carrie in the *Sex and the City* episode when she colonized Mr. Big's medicine cabinet, and it won't work for you, either. If you spend a lot of time at his place and it would be nice to have a change of clothes and a toothbrush with you when you do, would it really be all that difficult to ask if that's cool with him? If you don't feel that the relationship is at the point where you can ask such a question, then it's *definitely* not at the point where you should go ahead without asking.

So, are we off in our time machine back to a time when the only thing a woman can do is be pretty and passive and wait and hope for a man to commit? Of course not. When appropriate, start the conversation. But carefully choose the direction from which you approach the issue. I wouldn't recommend the seemingly typical: "What are we?" or "Where is this going?" They're open-ended questions and could mean any number of things; while *you* may be all warmed up for this conversation and know exactly what you mean and what you want to know, he might have been thinking about pizza and feel that he just got tossed into the deep end. Even if you don't have an agenda and are just asking for his point of view, he probably won't know that. Odds are that the previous women in his life who have started conversations like this with him expected him to commit in that moment, and they might have resented him or badgered him to justify himself if he didn't. These kinds of questions also can have associations with being needy, weak, and/or manipulative.

What would be a better way to start this conversation? Two considerations here can help us. First, men tend to be specific and practical. So even asking, "Are we boyfriend and

girlfriend?” is better than “Where is this going?”—though it’s still not what I’d advise. Second, remember the nature of committed relationships. They happen when people value the relationship more than their independence—or are more afraid of losing the other person than they are of losing their independence. So play on this dynamic—subtly. Ask him something like “Hey, I know this is coming out of left field, but I realized that we’ve never really talked about this. Should we be seeing other people?”

Starting the conversation this way forces him to realize that being involved with you is a two-way street. Using the wording above (or similar) will make the conversation easier. For one thing, the question is not demanding; you’re just asking for his understanding of the parameters of your relationship. You’re not even expressing a preference, let alone pressuring him. A second powerful element is the unspoken but unavoidable implication that if he’s going to see other people, of course you will, too, and he will risk losing you, possibly to a man who *will* commit. Some men might not have consciously considered this possibility, so a nonthreatening (that is, unspoken) reminder can be helpful here.

Regardless of what it is, his answer to your question is going to be unambiguous and you will have clarity. If he says no, you’re not supposed to be seeing other people, that means he sees you as boyfriend and girlfriend. If he says that both of you should see other people, then he clearly doesn’t (unless both of you want an open relationship). If he gives this response without further explanation, then you can assume he’s unlikely to consider an exclusive relationship with you in the future, either. If you want to continue dating him without exclusivity or the prospect of exclusivity, go for it; otherwise, it’s time to say good-bye. If he wanted to leave the door open for the two

of you to be a couple in the future, he'd say something about it being too soon or him not being ready for a relationship right now. Your next move depends on you and on the specific dynamics of your relationship: you can keep dating him (while exploring options with other men), or you can tell him to give you a call when he's ready to commit to you. If the former, don't let this situation drift on forever, unless you change your mind and decide that you like the lack of exclusivity; let him know that you *are* looking for something committed with him (the "with him" is important) but that you will give him some time to sort out his feelings while you both see other people as well. Then circle a date one to two months ahead in your calendar as your deadline. Don't tell him you are setting a deadline. And definitely don't sulk about the outcome of this conversation—it won't help you. When the deadline hits, give him one last chance to commit to you; if he doesn't then, he likely never will.

Another possible response to your question would be turning it back onto you with an "I don't know; do *you* want to be seeing other people?" This is probably not a trick or a trap. It usually means that he *hasn't* been seeing others and probably assumed that you haven't been, either. In which case you can confidently answer no, but that you want to hear his opinion. Then he has to answer.

Within a Relationship

We'll be covering relationships in the next chapter, but there's one element that goes with "having the talk": changes to the boundaries and rules of your relationship. For example, if you and your boyfriend were monogamous and now you want to see other people, you must have an explicit conversation

about this. You can't assume that the relationship has evolved to allow you to see other men without discussing it with your partner first.

Most people see the absurdity in this example. But fewer see the same absurdity in making the reverse assumption. My former client Jesse met a lot of women during and after his program. Just like a man facing starvation probably doesn't make the most sophisticated restaurant critic, Jesse wasn't really in a good position to know what he wanted when desirable women started paying attention to him. As such, he was very clear with women that he wasn't looking for anything serious or committed at that point.

Most women accepted this without problem; many of them had the same desire. Others concluded that Jesse wasn't open to what they wanted and moved on. One woman, Cassandra, said she was okay with it, and over the next couple months Jesse started spending more and more time with her. But he hadn't stopped seeing other women, and one night Cassandra felt deeply hurt and angry when her friend told her that she'd seen Jesse out with another woman. He reminded her that the boundaries of their relationship had been discussed, that she knew he was interested in meeting others, and that she was free to do the same. Her response: "Yeah, I know, but I thought we were past all of that now."

In other words, she assumed. Hopefully by this point, we're on the same page about the danger of making assumptions. In particular, there is a huge danger in making assumptions that happen to coincide with what you want anyway. If you want a relationship to change in some way, it's on you to have enough respect for your partner to discuss it instead of assuming that it's already happened.

The sad thing for Jesse and Cassandra is that he was genuinely getting closer to her. If she'd have told him honestly how she felt, things might have changed. But given that she decided to approach the issue by disrespecting him, his preferences, and the effort he made to ensure that he *wasn't* leading her on, he quickly changed his mind about whether she had long-term potential. Even if you're genuinely sure (as opposed to hoping) that your partner feels the same way as you, take the time to confirm it with him. What's the downside?

TURNING FRIENDS INTO MORE

Turning a friend into more-than-a-friend is one of the more subtle and complex dances in today's dating world. It's also an area that requires many exceptions, caveats, and qualifiers like "depending on his personality" or "if he's a such-and-such type of man." Earlier, we could confidently discuss the behaviors, attitudes, and responses of men in general and of high-value men in particular. Not all men are created equal, but when you're dealing with a large sample size, the generalizations we inevitably have to make will apply correctly most of the time. If you spend a few days or nights socializing and ten different men approach you, odds are that at least eight or nine of them will behave in the predictable ways that I've described thus far. That's because I have a lot of experience with men who are pursuing romantic and/or sexual relationships with women. In contrast, I know almost nothing about the one specific friend of yours whom you have a crush on. Now we're talking about a sample size of one. This guy isn't someone you just met, and I can't predict how your shared history

will influence his feelings and actions. Thus, while I want to give you strategies that I've seen work repeatedly, do pass them through your own commonsense filter first.

Your best overall plan to turn a friend into more is first to strike an appropriate balance between being "one of the guys" and expressing your natural feminine mysteriousness. Subtly create opportunities for him to take things to the next level with you, but don't push anything or even imply that you're interested in him. If he doesn't figure out on his own how great the two of you would be together (or if he doesn't think you'd be interested, doesn't want to risk the friendship, etc.), then shock some sense into the boy by having him see you in an entirely new light.

Being His Friend

In terms of balancing being his buddy and being the attractive woman that you are, a lot will depend on your respective ages, the dynamics of your friendship, and so on. Ideally, the two of you will share some interests, but he shouldn't think of you as his activity buddy. Don't allow yourself to get slotted into one narrow role in his life.

Let's say that you're both in your early or midtwenties. Your crush and some of his friends are going to watch the big game at a local bar. What do you do? Be one of the guys and hang out? Or be feminine and mysterious and make him think about you instead? Ideally both. Show up, but where the guys might be wearing whatever they've had on all day, you'll have put on sexy jeans and a cute top. You'll probably bring a girlfriend. You'll be interested in the game, or even if you aren't, you'll know enough to *look* interested and not to talk

over crucial moments in the action. You'll cheer, high-five, and have a good time, but probably won't go in for the half-dozen shots your friend says he'll do if his team wins. When the game is over, the night starts getting sloppy, and someone suggests heading off to another dive bar, it's time for you to go. Besides, your presence at the next bar will just interfere with all of his friends talking about what an amazingly cool girl you are.

Now your lifestyle or his might be nothing like the above, but the general principles should still hold. It's all about striking a balance. The day-to-day aspects of the friendship are where you build comfort and connection with each other and explore what you have in common. But holding back a bit from being just like his male friends gives you a mystique and builds tension. Otherwise you're effectively his sister.

On another note, don't *ever* be his dating or relationship counselor. It can deepen the friendship and in a vulnerable moment can lead to something physical happening, but rarely does this scenario lead to anything other than one person feeling used and disappointed. If he brings other women around, be polite and friendly (*actually* friendly, not that "frenemy" style of friendly) but don't bond with her or ask him about her later. Don't praise her or vent about her to mutual friends. The time for him to realize that there might be something there with you, his longtime friend, is *not* when he's focused on another woman who is making him happy.

Your own dating life should stay mysterious, though not so much so that your behavior comes across as weird or he wonders if you're secretly a lesbian or have intimacy issues or don't trust him. Ambiguity is your friend. What did you do last Friday? You went to dinner with a friend; you don't need to

volunteer that it was a date. Are you able to come with everyone to the concert on Saturday? No, you already have plans—he doesn't need to know that those plans involve a date—but maybe you can meet up with them for a drink after. And so on.

Structuring Opportunities

If you and he normally spend a lot of one-on-one time together, you've already structured enough opportunities for him and you can skip to the next section. But if most of your interactions with this friend are in the context of larger groups, you might need to take action. For example, if you happen to be driving him and a couple of other people home, try to drop him off last. Or, sometimes a little more complicated to arrange, have him drop you off last if he's driving; either way, you get to spend some time together without anyone having any reason to gossip. Did you ask him to hang on to something because you didn't have pockets and then "forget" to get it back from him? Don't wait until everyone is hanging out again; make an excuse why you need it soon and swing by his place.

Shock Therapy

Some men need a bit of shock therapy to shake them into seeing you in a new light or into taking action on their feelings. This is one of those rare Hollywood clichés (for example, *She's All That*) that actually plays out in reality once in a while: Male friend and female friend are buddies. Male friend is oblivious to how great a couple they would be. Then one day male friend suddenly sees female friend in a new light. It could be seeing you at your most beautiful and feminine and done-up, or seeing a side of your personality that he didn't

before, or really anything that suddenly changes or adds to his perception of you.⁶

Let's say he invites you as his platonic date to a wedding. Or maybe a larger group, including him, is going to a fancy nightclub one night. These are examples of great opportunities to pull out all the stops with your appearance and to administer a bit of shock therapy. He won't think you're dressing up for him, but he'll notice how you look. We've discussed that flirting with other men doesn't necessarily make you more attractive, though it doesn't hurt to have other men admire you and/or talk to him about how amazing you look. But there's an exception to every rule, and if we're talking about shock therapy here, maybe your friend *does* need to see you flirt a bit and see other men interested in you. So if all else fails, flirt a bit. People sometimes don't realize what they have right in front of them until it's (almost) gone—or has become a hot commodity.

The Alcohol-Induced Hookup

It's unfortunately common that a man (or a woman) might need a couple of drinks to take a risk or to reveal their true feelings. This is usually not a good idea—not least because those feelings may belong more to the bottle of Smirnoff than to you or your friend—but it happens enough that we're going to have to talk about it. And, in any case, it doesn't *always* end in tears.

So what do you do when the object of your desire and you have just finished a bottle of wine or two and the conversation

6. In movies, they will often actually use a literally different light to make the “transformed” character even more attractive after her transformation. You're just going to have to rely on your beauty skills.

suddenly stops for a second as you make eye contact and you start leaning into each other as if drawn together by invisible magnets?

Don't. Go. All. The. Way.

I say this even though I and many others have had great relationships that started with a spontaneous and unexpected hookup. But it's just as likely to lead to regrets the next morning, or the possibly worse dissipation of romantic/sexual tension and a feeling of "Wow, I'm glad we got *that* out of our system."

As exciting and validating as it might be to just enjoy a passionate night with a friend whom you're interested in, do you really want to wake up tomorrow and wonder what it meant? That morning-after situation can be a minefield. Sometimes it's unambiguous, for example, if you two wake up together and look into each other's eyes and agree that it's so amazing that this happened and you're together now. But if you're counting on seeing that reaction, your odds are better at the movie theater than in real life. Usually, the situation is much more awkward and confusing, as both people wonder how the other feels about the night before. I've seen situations where both people actually want to be together, but their awkwardness made each assume that the other didn't, so neither brought the subject up for fear of risking their friendship. This scenario is especially likely if you don't spend the night together and one of you goes home after the encounter. Then you've got the added complication of wondering whether he's going to call or text, and, when he does, not having body language or facial expressions to work with, or even tone if you're texting each other—which I would not recommend in this case.

At the same time, though, I'm not going to tell you to reject

an alcohol-fueled advance with a flat "You're drunk." He'll probably interpret the rejection as permanent, and the last thing you want to do is get into an argument with him over whether he's drunk or not. So what *do* you do in that case?

Keep the tension up, give him a little encouragement, and leave the ball in his court. When he leans in to kiss you, put your finger up to his lips, and say something to the effect of "Not like this, sweetie." Depending on his reaction, you can follow up with "If you really feel this way, then take me out to dinner tomorrow like a normal girl you're trying to impress." You can even give him a (quick!) kiss on the cheek for encouragement if you want. This response opens the door if he's serious about you, but without risking your friendship, putting yourself out there too much, or making you vulnerable.

After that, try not to do anything different from what you'd normally do. End the night as soon as you can, but without his feeling that he did something wrong and you're running away. Do not ever bring up what happened, or your offer. Don't ask if he thought about what you said or if he remembers last night. He remembers enough. And if he was really so drunk that he doesn't remember, then it probably didn't mean anything anyway, or if he really needs to get *so* drunk he won't remember what happened afterward just to be able to express his feelings, he may not be a great boyfriend for you anyway.

Chapter Eleven

Relationships: Moving the Rock

The day-to-day dynamics of a relationship are rarely as exciting or romantic as the initial courtship—there's a reason Disney never considered making *Snow White and the Prince Argue about Housework* or *Cinderella 2: Marriage Counseling*. You and your man can call each other soul mates if you want—you're not hurting anyone—but if you expect that you and he are so perfectly matched that you will never need to work through any issues or conflicts, then you've probably never been in a relationship before. In any relationship, especially the more committed and long-term it is, it's crucial that the two of you are able to understand each other, solve problems, and grow together.

Relationships are also different from the initial courtship in that there aren't as many shortcuts available to help you reach your goals. When you and a man first meet, the way you feel about each other will necessarily be based on assumptions, inferences, and signals from the limited knowledge and observations that you do have of one another. Many of the techniques we've explored in this book rely on information being limited in this way. A man doesn't actually have to *be* high-status or preselected by women; he can create that

same impression out of thin air if he knows what he's doing, and women should respond to him in the same way. Similarly, you don't actually have to be so much in demand or so unsure about a man that you're genuinely a challenge for him; you only have to *act* hard to get and he should feel the same emotional response. But such techniques become much less relevant as the two of you get to know each other better. If he didn't like you for you, no methods or system would even have gotten you a second date, let alone into a relationship.

In the absence of shortcuts, how *do* you reach your relationship goals? How do you get your needs and desires met, whatever those might be, while also staying together for the long-term? The answer is deceptively simple: make him want what you want. No, I don't mean trying to get him to love shopping or romantic comedies; I'm saying that your focus should be on encouraging him to *want* to meet your needs, make you happy, and stay with you. This probably involves meeting *his* needs and making him happy. There's a bit of a virtuous circle here; if you are happy and fulfilled in a relationship, you'll probably want to make sure that your partner feels the same way. If he does, he's likely to want to make you even *more* happy and fulfilled, which should prompt you to do even more to meet his needs, and so on. Of course, the same dynamic can create a vicious cycle if you or your partner feels unhappy or unfulfilled and reduces their efforts in the relationship. So, how do you create positive momentum? How can you make each other happy, and how can you stay that way?

Many people would instinctively answer this question by thinking of things they can do for their partner: a special meal, a bedroom treat, a favorite activity, and so on. This approach does have its place, and we'll get there at the end of

this chapter. But my observation is that most people in relationships don't lack for ideas about what their partner likes. In fact, you and your man probably *do* make each other happy (there was a reason you got into a relationship, right?), but if you don't feel happy with him or the situation, it's probably because there is enough negativity between the two of you that the positives are diminished in comparison.

Imagine your relationship as a flower, and its problems and issues as a large rock. While the rock is on top of the flower, no amount of feeding or watering or care is going to help the flower grow; the issue is that you need to get the rock out of the way so the flower can bloom again. In a relationship, being better able to handle the negatives (moving the rock) is often more important than creating more positives (growing the flower).

So let's move that rock. Or, better still, let's prevent it from landing on your flower in the first place. Even though I can't give you the exact road map for your unique relationship, I can share with you some tools and techniques that I've seen many couples use to solve problems and sustain their relationship, even through rough patches. Of these, the most important are communication, problem solving, and handling conflict.

COMMUNICATION

Men and women communicate differently. In general, men tend to communicate to share and receive information, while women communicate for information sharing as well as for the pleasure and positive emotions that communicating and connecting with people bring about.

One implication of this difference is that men will try to solve your problems, even when you don't want them to.

Some men literally can't help it.¹

When *he* talks about a problem, it's usually because he's looking for a solution, so it's natural for him to assume that the

Men will try to solve your problems, even when you don't want them to. Some men literally can't help it.

same is true for you. If I complain that I keep getting stuck in traffic on my commute to work, I'd be very interested if someone told me that I must be leaving too late in the morning and that the roads are much clearer before 7 a.m. If it were you who was complaining, you may be looking for the same sort of answer. Or, you may be wanting your man to respond to the emotional content of what you said, which would sound something like "That's got to be so annoying. You work hard enough as it is without having to be stuck in traffic like that."

Many women feel frustrated that their partner isn't listening or doesn't care if they are expecting empathy and understanding from him but get problem-solving advice instead.² In fact, the opposite might be true; he's probably trying to help with your problem because he *is* listening and he *does* care. On the other hand, if he does respond to your complaint on an emotional level, it's not an accident; he is making a deliberate effort to communicate with you on your terms. Some men will do this, but most won't even know how. You have to teach them, or learn to translate his language. (See the box "Teaching Men to Speak Woman.")

1. Louann Brizendine, *The Male Brain* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010).

2. Don't worry too much about making the opposite mistake. If you responded emotionally instead of literally to a man, it probably wouldn't bother him much; he might think that you missed his point or that you're not being especially helpful, but it's not likely that he would become frustrated or angry. That said, a man is almost always going to be looking for a literal response, and there's no reason not to give it to him.

Teaching Men to Speak Woman

All Love Systems programs include a module on storytelling. The client tells us a favorite story and we help him translate it for a woman's ear. I'm sharing with you some of the most common steps we take in this process, so that you can reverse-engineer them if you ever are having trouble getting your point across and need to "speak man."

1) *His version has too many facts*—A typical man's story about something funny that happened on the subway might start off with factual details like: "I was getting on the subway at Dupont around 7:30 in the morning, which was earlier than normal for me, but I had an 8:30 meeting with my boss today, so I had to leave early. Anyway, we'd only gone three stops when [whatever funny thing happened]." We help men cut these facts out and include only as many details as are necessary to convey the point of the story. In this case, the above forty-three words could be replaced by "I was on the subway this morning and . . .," which would leave a lot more room for emotional content.

Reverse engineering: Add enough factual information to make him comfortable that he knows what is going on. Be careful, though—use only *necessary* detail, as many men have little patience with people who take forever to get to the point. If you're telling your boyfriend about something that happened on the subway this morning, and he's busy wondering why you were on the subway in the first place because you normally drive to work, he's not going to be fully listening to your story anyway. And when he interrupts to ask why you weren't in your car, just as you're building to the punch line of your story, you may feel like he isn't listening to

you or doesn't care what you have to say. Really, though, the opposite is probably true: such questions show that he *does* care; if he didn't, he wouldn't ask.

2) *His version lacks emotional content*—An average man could probably tell you the story of climbing a mountain or traveling to the South Pole without describing a single emotion. This doesn't mean that he is emotionally dead or isn't comfortable sharing his feelings with you. Men just don't generally volunteer such information unless asked directly, for example: "So how did it feel when you finally made it to the top of the mountain?" A man telling an emotion-laden story to other men would normally come across as very self-indulgent, and he would risk being mocked mercilessly by them. As we know, men don't tend to empathize with others' emotions—or expect others to empathize with theirs—as much as women.

Reverse engineering: Of course it's okay to tell him how you feel and to punctuate certain points with emotional commentary. But a blow-by-blow account of your emotional journey through the course of a day can be overwhelming for him, and he may not be as successful as you'd like in recognizing and responding to what you consider the most important parts of your story. If your man sometimes misses the forest for the trees like this, start with the bare-bones facts and *then* tell him how those facts make you feel rather than throwing everything at him at once.

3) *His version lacks dramatic tension*—Most men are not natural storytellers. I had a client who was a firefighter, and he described the climax to his most intense firefighting experience as follows: "There was a lot of smoke. I could barely see.

Eventually I heard someone shouting from behind me, so I ran toward the voice. That turned out to be the right call.” That’s probably exactly how he should share the story with his peers, who can fill in the blanks from their own experience. But it would be deeply unsatisfying to most women, who would naturally expect some sort of buildup and then climax, especially when such a dramatic scene is set. Women expect to be entertained by conversation as well as communicated with.

Reverse engineering—Get to the point, or at least give him some idea of what your point is going to be. If you want to tell the whole long story about *how* you ended up dressed as Lady Gaga on a bus to Houston at 4 a.m., that’s great, but unless suspense or a surprise ending is a key element to your story, consider starting it with an introduction like: “You’ll never believe what happened to my friends and I last weekend; we ended on an overnight bus across the country by accident!” If he knows in general where your story is going, he’ll be more engaged in following it there.

Again, the above are troubleshooting tips if you are having trouble communicating with the man or men in your life. It’s no more your responsibility to “speak man” than it is his to “speak woman.” But if either of you feels that you’re sometimes talking past each other, understanding where the other person is coming from might help.

Because men do communicate primarily to give and receive information, they may take what you say more seriously than you intend. Elisa, a former client of mine, had gone on a few dates with a man with whom things seemed to be going very well, until he suddenly seemed to lose interest and hold back emotionally. He’d made a cryptic comment that he’d recently

gotten out of one long-distance relationship and didn't want to get into another. This statement puzzled Elisa, since they lived in the same city and she'd only been away for two short business trips since they had met a couple months earlier.

When we dug deeper and she talked to him again, he noted that she'd mentioned at different times that she wanted to travel to her favorite music festival in a few weeks, go to Europe sometime in the summer, visit her family for her mom's sixtieth birthday, be chosen for a project at work that happened to involve a lot of travel, and so on. When he added it all up, her schedule didn't seem to allow for much nontravel time. But to Elisa, these travel ideas were only random desires or possibilities that gave her pleasure to talk about. She knew that realistically, she couldn't do all of them, and that most wouldn't pan out anyway. But he didn't know that. To him, they were real plans; why would Elisa talk about them if they weren't?

"But I was just talking," she told me. And there lay the issue. Most men don't intuitively understand the concept of "just talking." Like women, men do have a BS detector, but that's not the same as a filter that can tell him: "She's not lying or making this up, but she also doesn't mean for what she's saying to be taken literally." In a man's mind, he's doing you the respect of taking what you say seriously and listening and responding to it.

The same difference in communication styles can also cause the opposite problem. If your man is musing about the two of you maybe driving to Montana to spend the summer at Great Uncle Boris' Survival Camp, this is a possibility that he is genuinely considering. It may be a strong possibility or it may be a remote one, but he's thinking of it. If you were planning on having a Boris-free summer, *say something*. If you assume that he was "just talking," and then act surprised when

he starts preparing for the trip, he will likely be hurt that you didn't take him seriously, or he'll be frustrated that you didn't speak up sooner.

How Much Communication?

Not only do men and women tend to communicate for different purposes and in different ways, but they also tend to communicate in different amounts. In fact, the average woman has *three times* the communication needs as the average man; she speaks 21,000 words per day, compared to 7,000 for him.³ That's a massive gap—much bigger than most of the other personality or physical differences between men and women that we've talked about in this book.

Let's say you both use about seven thousand words during the workday. Then you both go home at night, and he's all talked out, but you still have two-thirds of your daily talking to do. It's no wonder so many women complain that their partners are unresponsive or uncommunicative, and so many men complain that their partners' constant talking can feel smothering and oppressive.

Part of the solution here can be found in the importance of keeping your own friends, interests, and hobbies when you're

3. Brizendine, *The Female Brain* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006). These findings were challenged by Matthias R. Mehl et al., "Are Women Really More Talkative Than Men?" *Science* 317, no. 5834 (July 6, 2007). However, the latter study included only college students, limiting its applicability, and did not challenge the conclusion that women are more likely to talk through issues and conflict while a man is more likely to withdraw emotionally and be less communicative. Point being: you have more need to communicate than he does. Whether this dynamic applies all the time or only when there's something he doesn't want to talk about is irrelevant to the conclusions that we'll draw in this section.

in a relationship.⁴ Such social outlets can reduce the pressure on him, making you both happier. Win-win. But what if you don't want to go out and talk to your friends? What if you want to share and connect with your boyfriend? Why is he in a relationship with you anyway if he doesn't want to talk to you?

I'm glad you asked. First off, he might not want to talk as much as you do, but that doesn't mean that he doesn't want to talk at all. There is no more a "correct" amount of communication in a relationship than there is a "correct" amount of sex; if you want more than he does, that's a difference of opinion, not a failing on his part. Or vice versa, of course. To most men, sitting around and chatting is a leisure activity like any other, and it doesn't have any special importance in comparison with other ways he can spend his time. If having lots of long conversations with your man is something *you* enjoy, then screen for that quality when you are meeting and dating men, just like you'd screen for someone who likes to go out at night if dancing and parties were a priority for you. You may think that extended conversation is an exception to this rule since communication builds and develops the relationship and should therefore be a priority, but he may not. Or he may feel that what *really* develops a relationship and would make him feel closer to you is your cooking a gourmet meal

*There is no more a
"correct" amount of
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of sex.*

4. Really, you should be doing this anyway—for your own sanity and for balance in your life—regardless of how well you and your partner communicate. A woman with her own life is also inherently more attractive (see chapter 4) and less dependent on her man or vulnerable if the relationship doesn't work out.

every night for the two of you to share, or having a threesome with you and one of your girlfriends. Point being: everyone has their own ideas about what they want and expect in a relationship and what brings them closer to their partner. It will be much easier for you to find a man who wants the same things you do than it is to force your preferences and expectations on a man who doesn't share them.

Of course, better screening isn't always the solution. People and relationships change. Maybe he was open and communicative when you were first getting to know each other and now he's more withdrawn. This problem should be solvable. A healthy relationship should allow for some give-and-take, and, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, you and your partner should ideally *want* to make each other happy. You want more time to sit around and talk, to explore and share and discuss your feelings. In that case, it's only fair that you think about activities *he* might enjoy if you did more to make *him* happy. And if you don't want to do those things, for example, spend more time watching sports, cook his favorite dish, or do that thing in bed he likes so much—well, how do you think he'll respond to your request for more chatting time?

Conveniently, we're about to explore strategies and dos and don'ts for making changes in your relationship.

Problem Solving: Negotiating Your Relationship

In many ways, a relationship can be like an extended negotiation as it evolves and develops. And by this, I absolutely *do not* mean a power struggle or an endless series of win-lose battles. Unlike what you see in movies and on TV, great negotiators are not aggressive cigar-chomping dragons who bully

and intimidate the other side into submission.⁵ In fact, that kind of strategy doesn't usually work at all. If an agreement is lopsided, the other person will figure it out sooner or later and then cancel the agreement, ask to renegotiate it, or otherwise try to sabotage it. Meanwhile, they'll build up resentment, hurt your reputation with others, and probably won't do a deal with you in the future—or want serious payback if they do.

These principles apply just as much to romance as to business relationships. As does this key point that bears repeating: you're going to be a lot better off in the long-term if you proactively help your partner reach his goals. That doesn't mean being codependent or responsible for his happiness, but it does mean actively looking out for his interests. It sounds obvious, but it's not; in many relationships the default problem-solving tools are bullying and/or compromise. Obviously, compromise is better for your relationship than a constant power struggle, but it's still only a half a loaf for each person when full loaves might be available. There's a better way.

Remember Edward the paratrooper? His fiancée, Monica, wanted to spend the holidays with her family on the other side of the country (Edward's parents had both passed away), but Edward hated traveling over the holidays, or at any busy, chaotic time of year. In many relationships, someone would simply "win"—they go and Edward sucks it up, or they don't go and Monica deals with it. The downsides to that approach are obvious. Other couples might compromise; maybe they visit Monica's family every second year instead of every year. This outcome is a little bit better, but can still lead to resentment, since compromises are not always viewed as equally fair by

5. Many of the negotiation principles described in this section were inspired by the negotiation handbook *Getting More* by Stuart Diamond (New York: Crown Business, 2010).

both sides. More importantly, neither person really gets what they want. Edward still has to travel when he doesn't want to, and Monica doesn't spend as much time with her family as she'd like.

The better approach is to focus on *interests and goals* instead of on *positions*. Monica's position was that she wanted her and Edward to visit her family over the holidays. But what interests and goals is she trying to fulfill by adopting this position? Seeing her family? Spending the holidays with them? Having Edward and her family get to know each other better? Or was it that a woman born and raised in New York felt disoriented facing Christmas in sunny and snow-free Arizona? And so on.

It turned out that Monica really wanted to spend the holidays with Edward and her parents together. She also wanted to go home and see her old friends, but that was of secondary importance, and didn't necessarily have to be over the holidays. So what did they agree on? They bought Monica's parents tickets to come visit *them* for the holidays, which her parents were happy to do (and escape the cold), and agreed that Monica would go back east for a visit some other time of the year, possibly with Edward, possibly alone. By taking Monica's interests into account, Edward's needs were met (not having to travel over the holidays) better than they could have been in any compromise. As were Monica's. In fact, Edward told me that the outcome was even better than his position going in; he would never have thought of flying Monica's parents to visit, and their visit had made the holidays more fun for everyone.

Using this approach takes some patience at first. Let him into your thinking. Explain what it is you're doing. With any luck, he'll pitch in and will want to know what your interests are so he can try to find an outcome that works for both

of you. Don't get attached to any particular resolution (which would then become your position and defeat the purpose of this approach), especially since most problems have multiple possible solutions. Monica could have found out that Edward's objection to traveling over the holidays was due to busy airports, cramped flights, and lost baggage, which could have led her to suggest a longer trip allowing them to avoid peak holiday travel days, flying first class (if they could afford it), using less busy secondary airports, or taking the train instead. None of these solutions are obviously better or worse than Edward's, and any of them would have been superior to compromise or a power struggle.

Another benefit of this approach is that you and your partner will get to know each other better and learn what the other person really values. It's natural to expect that others think the way we do and value the same things, but that's often not the case and can be a very damaging assumption to make in a relationship. My friend and former client Stephen told me about an otherwise promising relationship with his ex-girlfriend Tara that foundered in part because of these sorts of assumptions. Tara loved wine and everything about it—wineries, wine tasting, wine tours, and so on—while Stephen didn't much care one way or the other. For a long time she talked about how nice it would be to spend a weekend visiting wineries in the Napa Valley. And then one year for Christmas, that was what she gave him: a couple's wine tour. Tara wasn't particularly manipulative or uncaring about what Stephen valued; she just assumed (there's that word again...) that something that sounded exciting to her would be as exciting to him, without taking care to find out. Whether or not you'd ever be so oblivious as to miss the mark in such a way, realize that most people overestimate how well they understand other people's

motivations and desires. American actor Henry Winkler put it best: "Assumptions are the termites of relationships." Time spent getting to know your man better, and vice versa, is rarely time wasted.

Still, some people will get defensive when you start asking them about their interests and motives, especially if they're not used to this approach. Going back to Monica and Edward, she could have responded to his problem-solving attempt with something like: "What do you mean, what part of us going home for the holidays is really important to me? It's the part where we go home for the holidays!" Usually this kind of unhelpful resistance happens when there isn't enough trust in the relationship and/or when one person has a very selfish perspective. If this describes your situation, you might want to question whether he is the man for you.

Of course, not every problem is most efficiently solved through this type of interest-based approach. If I want to stay at the party until 11:00 p.m. and you want to leave at 10:00 p.m., maybe we just leave at 10:30 p.m. and get on with our lives. But you may be surprised by how often you can use these principles once you have some practice.

HANDLING CONFLICT

Even with the best will in the world to make each other happy, understand each other's perspective, and solve problems collaboratively, you and your partner will still have conflict. In fact, handling conflict in a relationship could be (and surely is) a whole book by itself. But let's cover some of the highlights. I've included here the top five relationship killers that I've seen over and over from women. We'll break these situations down and then talk about how to rectify or avoid them.

Arguing About Arguing

Often what a woman will interpret and describe as talking about or working on the relationship will be seen by a man much more bluntly as arguing or fighting. Sometimes couples even start arguing—or discussing, depending on your point of view—about whether they are fighting or whether they are talking!

If you're arguing about whether you're arguing, it's time to take a break. I mean this literally. Taking a short break is a great way to short-circuit brewing conflict, especially if you both use that time to relax or burn off excess energy instead of stewing about whatever is bothering you. Taking this principle a step further, it's usually a good idea—when possible—to cool down, even for a day or two, before bringing up a difficult issue anyway.

In addition, it's not usually helpful in a relationship to tell the other person how to feel about something. If he says, "I don't want to fight about this right now," it's because he feels that there is conflict and for whatever reason, he'd like to defer the conversation until later. Whether you accept his request or not, you'll accomplish nothing by arguing to him that his feelings are wrong.⁶

Semantics aside, should you accept his request? That depends on you and on the relationship. If, for example, it's Friday night and he's had a long week at work and the issue isn't pressing, then it's fine to give him the night off if he asks for it. But you'd also be well within your rights to tell him

6. If you want to address this issue head-on, you can also say that you weren't intending to fight with him, and you can acknowledge the importance of his feelings and perception by asking him how he'd like you to bring up issues in the future so he doesn't feel attacked.

that the issue is important to you and ask him if it's cool to bring it up again over the weekend. (Why ask instead of simply telling him that you plan to do so? Because he can't really say no without looking ridiculous, so you're going to get the answer you want anyway, and it will be much easier to initiate the conversation later if he's already explicitly agreed to have it.) Taking his point of view into account and giving it equal weight to yours doesn't mean giving him veto power over whether you bring issues to the surface; if he thinks he's going to have a great relationship with a great woman and never have to talk about anything or work on anything... well, he's going to be another woman's problem before long anyway.

On a more optimistic note, it's a general rule that women tend to want to work through conflict while men tend to withdraw emotionally.⁷ So if your relationship includes this fighting/talking dynamic, don't worry; you're just a normal woman dating a normal man. Plenty of couples have gotten through this issue before, and with a bit of understanding and patience with each other, you will, too.

Sulking Into Conflict

Most men find it frustrating or even disrespectful when a woman makes it obvious that there is something wrong but won't come out and say something about it. Even worse is when he asks what's wrong and she responds by saying "nothing" in a tone that makes it unmistakably clear that there *is* something. This is a passive-aggressive and manipulative approach that is nearly certain to put him on the defensive

7. A. Christensen, "Dysfunctional Interaction Patterns in Couples," in P. Noller and M. A. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Perspectives on Marital Interaction*, Monographs in Social Psychology of Language, vol. 1 (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 1988).

and poison the subsequent conversation. Is that really how you want to approach an issue affecting your relationship?

Some women justify this behavior on the grounds that the man should know what he's done wrong, so his asking her "What's wrong?" is in itself insulting or manipulative. But two wrongs don't make a right, and this kind of tit-for-tat won't help your relationship. In any case, we've already covered the fallacy of assuming that other people share your perceptions. He may well not know what he's done wrong, as men are generally much less emotionally intuitive than women, and he's probably not as good at reading your emotions as you are at reading his. You would generally be on safer ground if you assume good faith on his part. If you can't do that—if you're really sure that he's the kind of guy who knows he's done wrong but pretends to you that he hasn't—then the issue isn't about sulking into conflict; it's about whether the two of you have enough trust and respect to be together. I wouldn't recommend staying with anyone who treats you that way.

Phil the doctor started dating a woman who he'd met at a running club shortly after his bootcamp. Both Tina and Phil are quite active people, though she a bit more than he. Most of the time he can keep up, but during football season he becomes a lump on the couch for a few hours every Sunday. Tina had every right to break up with Phil if she didn't like the way he spent his time, or to talk to him about it and explain why it upset her. She also had every right to decide that Phil's watching a few hours of football on Sundays for part of the year wasn't a big deal, and to use that time to do her own thing. She even—if she wanted to—could join Phil once in a while and take a shot at learning what it is he enjoys so much about his football time. The only option that wasn't going to get her anywhere was the one she chose to adopt, which was to

greet every Sunday with an edgy “So were you planning to sit on the couch all day *again* today?” All this accomplished was to make Phil feel a little bit guilty and a little bit more resentful of her.

If an issue isn't important enough to address directly, then it's definitely not important enough to be passive-aggressive or sulky about.

Being Legalistic

As we know already, most women are much more dextrous and subtle verbal communicators than men. You are most likely much better than he is at conveying an emotion or a thought without explicitly saying it. Some women use this skill to flirt, some use it to gossip about a rival without leaving fingerprints, and many use it with their best girlfriends to convey meaning and shades of meaning that are impenetrable to anyone outside the group.

You can probably use these skills to get your way a few times, but eventually a man will notice, become frustrated, and resentment will build up. Peter, a former client, recounted such a conversation with his ex-girlfriend Michelle:

Peter: Hey, I'm heading out to Jason's. Back in a couple hours.

Michelle [surprised and sad tone]: Oh...you're going out tonight?

Peter: Yes. We talked about this. Every Wednesday night I have my poker game and catch up with the boys.

Michelle: Oh...I see. So you don't really want to see me tonight?

Peter: No I love seeing you, I really enjoyed hanging out with you last night, and we'll do something fun this weekend, but tonight is boys' night.

Michelle: Is it that bad spending time with me? You're making it sound like an obligation.

Peter didn't end up going to poker night that week. In a separate conversation a few weeks later, Michelle told him that she felt that he does only what he wants, never what she wants. He brought up poker night as an example of when he put her needs first, but she discounted that, because she had never actually told him or asked him to stay home. When challenged, he couldn't point to anything specific to justify his feeling that she was being needy and controlling. So Michelle wins, right?

Wrong. This isn't a court of law. Peter doesn't have to justify his feelings; he only needs to have them. When he told me about this situation, I predicted that he would break up with her within a month. I was wrong; they broke up six weeks later.

Michelle would have been better off if she had come right out with her feelings. Instead of making Peter dance and re-explain poker night as if the weekly event were a big surprise, she should have said something like: "I know this is normally your poker night, but I'm just feeling very lonely/sad/ needing you/whatever tonight, and I was thinking it might be really nice to see you if you can make that work." This approach would not have guaranteed that Peter would have agreed, or even that he wouldn't have been annoyed by the request, but at least he wouldn't have resented her for being manipulative, which is much more damaging in the long run.

I recently overheard two women having coffee and discussing one woman's complaints about her boyfriend. Apparently he was supposed to go to her place the previous night and hadn't because he unexpectedly had to work late at his restaurant after someone called in sick. She was upset because not only did he not come over as planned, but the next morning he also complained that she had been pressuring him the night before. This woman proceeded to read the entire text conversation to her friend (and the rest of the coffee shop), starting from the previous night. It appeared to consist of her messaging him every fifteen minutes or so to ask if he was done yet or would be soon, and his responding that he didn't know when he would be out, but it would probably be very late. "Did I demand that he come over even once in any of those messages?" she asked her friend. Her friend agreed that, of course, she hadn't. Was her boyfriend nonetheless correct in his understanding of the spirit—if not the exact letter—of her messages? I'd bet my last dollar on it.

If you've got something to say to your man, just say it. Even if you're worried that there are things you "can't" say, or you won't like his reaction, half-saying your piece won't make things any better. If you find yourself often feeling uncomfortable saying the things you want to him, you might want to question whether your complaint is justified, or if your boyfriend is too thin-skinned to be in a relationship with you. But if what you have to say is important enough to be said, it's important enough to say clearly and to back up.

Choose Your Battles

There's a finite amount of time that you and your man are going to spend together. How much of that do you want to

spend arguing? How much can he handle? In my experience, most women have far more emotional energy than men to talk about relationships and relationship issues—as noted above, you are predisposed to try to work through emotional problems while men are predisposed to avoid them. The average man and the average woman need to find a middle ground; he'll probably have to have more relationship conversations than he'd like and you'll probably have to have fewer.

So, how do you pick your battles? What we've already talked about here is a good starting point. If an issue isn't important enough for you to bring up directly and stand behind what you say, then you should probably drop it. My former client Jillian complained to me that her boyfriend didn't seem to respect her because he never did anything she asked. When we did a role-play of one such conversation, it turned out that she never actually asked anything; she hinted. So we went through her needs and I helped her put her feelings into words. On one issue—asking him to be quieter when he got home late at night and she was asleep—she demurred. “I can't say that to him.” I asked her why. “Because he works so hard and when he comes home late it's because he was working overtime. He can't help it that coming home wakes me up.” I didn't say anything—just watched the gears turning in her head. “I guess I shouldn't let it upset me then,” she concluded. If she hadn't forced herself to phrase the issue clearly and explicitly and imagine herself expressing it to her boyfriend, she probably wouldn't have questioned her own feelings of resentment.

Anger and resentment in relationships often come when your expectations are not being met. There's no standardized Guide to Appropriate Expectations for Your Man, but make sure you clarify—and justify—to yourself exactly what your expectations are. Write them down, clearly, and in specific

detail. Specificity is key. Don't just write that you expect your boyfriend to show you that he cares about you; write down *how* he would show you that. For some women, that might mean fresh-cut flowers every day. For others, it means a phone call or a text message. Most men would probably find the latter reasonable and the former not. But if you really want the flowers every day, that's great—*own* this expectation and convey it clearly to the men you date.

I'll bet that the very act of writing down and forcing yourself to clarify your expectations will help you choose your battles. Maybe, like Jillian, you'll see that some of your expectations are unreasonable and need to be changed. Or maybe you'll realize just how far your man is from what you're looking for. If you're finding something that upsets you about your man or your relationship every day or two, then ask yourself if you are genuinely happy having him as your boyfriend. If you're sure that you adore him and want to keep him but there are still so many things that seem to be bothering you, then this exercise can be a great indicator that you should sanity-check your expectations again.

Regardless, if there are issues that you want to address and you do think your relationship has potential, then it's time for another big relationship talk. Don't just hand him your list; most men would find that arrogant and condescending. But don't sugarcoat things, either. Tell him you've been unhappy and there are some things that you'd like to change about your relationship. Tell him that you're sure that there are things he'd like to change, too, and suggest that you find a comfortable time and place to talk about both people's issues. (Don't treat this conversation as an ambush and dive into issues right away.) You don't have to mention that you already have a list that's all ready to go...

One Battle NOT to Choose

Most men are going to glance at other women. They just are. It doesn't mean that he is comparing them to you or that he wants to date or have sex with them. It's not even a conscious process most of the time; it's instinctual and automatic. His brain releases a "reward" chemical when he does.⁸ It does not threaten his relationship with you. (To be clear, "glancing at" does not mean "staring at"—still less "fantasizing about" or "flirting with.")

You can fight with him about this if you want, but it's not likely to get you anywhere. I've dated (straight) women who occasionally pointed out other attractive women to me. These conversations were always fun and entertaining and also showed me how confident and comfortable with herself she was. It also gave her a lot more credibility when she was genuinely concerned or jealous about something. You don't necessarily need to go this far, but I also wouldn't give him a hard time when he glances at an attractive figure walking by.

If you are a naturally assertive or dominant person, or just have a lot of emotional energy, be extra careful not to overwhelm your partner. Some men value peace and tranquillity enough that they'd rather let you win than argue. Steamrolling is not a viable long-term argument strategy—you risk his resentment building over time to the point where he eventually just breaks up with you, and you'd be one of those women saying it happened out of the blue and you never saw it coming.

8. Steven M. Platek and Devendra Singh, "Optimal Waist-to-Hip Ratios in Women Activate Neural Reward Centers in Men," *PLoS ONE* 5, no. 2 (February 5, 2010).

Sometimes a man can come across as “henpecked” because it can be easier to just do whatever his partner wants than have to have relationship discussions/arguments all the time. This is most commonly seen in relationships that aren’t easy to leave—when the couple is married, when children are involved, or when the man thinks of himself as too old to want to start over in the dating world. If you tend to be assertive and have high expectations from those around you, be sure not to let these positive qualities become a negative in your relationship. If your partner never disagrees with you or questions any request you make, that’s not a sign of a healthy relationship, and you might want to reexamine your behavior. Otherwise, he might snap. Even if he doesn’t, who wants to be with a henpecked man anyway?

Show Good Faith

In this chapter, we’ve covered a number of potential approaches to issues in your relationship: compromise, letting it go, interest-based problem solving, and so on. No matter how you get there, be sure that the solution is one you can accept and stick to—otherwise it’s not really a solution.

I’m not saying you should get everything you want, but you should sincerely be comfortable with the outcome. Once Monica agreed that her parents would visit her and Edward for the holidays, it wouldn’t have been appropriate for her to complain about how much she missed New York, or to act like Edward “won” the holiday issue and she lost, so she should get her way next time. If she was so opposed to the solution, she shouldn’t have agreed to it. Jillian decided not to bring up the issue of the noise her boyfriend made when he came home late, which is fine—if and only if it’s not going to bother her in

the future. If she's still going to be upset about it, then letting go of her concern would not be the right resolution.

Yes, this might mean more relationship discussion—which may appear to contradict the advice that you choose your battles. But if the choice is between having another relationship discussion or your resentment building up over an issue that you gave him an impression was resolved satisfactorily, he's going to prefer the former option every time.

Similarly, resolving an issue—especially with a compromise—should not be used as a starting point for a renegotiation. It would be bad faith for Tina to agree with Phil that they'd have one football-free weekend per month in return for her lightening up about other weekends if she was planning to use “one football-free weekend” as a baseline and try to negotiate for two, three, or even all weekends to be football free in the future. Why? Because Phil would presumably be under the impression that they'd found a true compromise and that in return for his one weekend per month, Tina would accept football on the others—not that she was simply preparing for the next round of further “compromises.” Sure, sometimes situations change, or you try a solution and realize that it's not working for you—by all means let him know if this becomes the case. But this isn't the same as deliberately planning for another round.

I'm not saying that you have to like every aspect of your relationship or your boyfriend's personality. You won't. It's impossible. But to be with anyone, you have to be willing to accept some things you might not like. Michelle was heartbroken when Peter broke up with her. She probably would have rather had Peter-who-plays-poker-sometimes than no Peter at all. But because she wouldn't accept the occasional

poker night as part of the normal give-and-take in a relationship, she lost him entirely.

A more subtle but equally damaging variation of this kind of bad faith behavior is to force a man to discuss and explain something that you don't like over and over. Of course you can revisit an old issue if your feelings have changed or you want more clarification or you feel unsatisfied with the resolution, but don't act like the conversation has never taken place before.

Managing conflict in relationships can be particularly challenging for women. Your natural impulses push you to address emotional issues, while your partner's push him to withdraw and resist your efforts. It doesn't help that society is a bit sexist about this issue and applies a double standard; no one hesitates to stereotype the woman who uses every pause in conversation as a springboard to talk about "us" or "the relationship," but her male counterpart who doesn't ever want to talk about anything, ever, is simply being a man. Because you're probably much better at reading his emotions than he is at reading yours, it can be really frustrating to feel that you see an issue so clearly and even know a solution that will make everyone happier, but not be able to communicate it to him or engage him.

Relax. You're supposed to drive each other crazy once in a while. It's impossible for two people not to. If it's more than "once in a while" that you're upset, take a step back and think about the situation. Do all of the things that bother you add up to a couple of bigger issues? Then it's not really that you and your man have so many problems; you just have a couple of issues with a lot of symptoms. But if not, you might want to think about whether you have unrealistic expectations from him or from a boyfriend in general, or, alternatively, whether

he is really the man for you. It can be better to break up and start fresh with someone more compatible than to be frustrated that your partner isn't meeting your needs. As Albert Einstein once said, "Women marry men hoping they'll change. Men marry women hoping they won't. Both are disappointed."

Whatever you do, pick a potential solution and run with it; don't just complain or get frustrated without doing anything about it. The only reward for enduring an unsatisfying relationship is more of the same. On the flip side, the rewards for building a great relationship, developing open communication, and being able to solve problems together should be an even better relationship in the future. Now *that* is something worth investing in.

Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed the time we've spent together and, more important, that you've discovered tools and ideas that will help you get the men, the love, and the relationships that you want.

At the same time, you've probably noticed along the way, amid the tactics, the studies, the techniques, and the dos and don'ts, that I've been sneaking in a few recurring and underlying messages.

One such theme is how absurd the modern dating scene is. Our biological impulses are designed for a completely different world that no longer exists. Most people don't know what they actually respond to, and many wouldn't admit it even if they did know. Add in a layer of good, old-fashioned sexism and the fact that society has still not fully come to terms with female sexuality, and it's no surprise that so many women throw their hands up in frustration.

Hopefully this book will help you make as much sense of the dating world as there is sense to be made, but realize that when you're talking about individual human behavior in the context of sex, dating, and relationships, unpredictable or odd things will happen. As much as possible, I'd encourage you just to smile sometimes at the absurdity of it all. Obviously, you want and need to take your love life seriously, but you

don't have to take seriously every moment along the way. That old cliché rings true here: life is not a destination but a journey. Try as much as possible to enjoy the journey. After all, you'll probably meet some interesting men along the way, have some fun, and learn a lot about the world around you—and maybe about yourself, too.

Another theme is: no one knows what you need in your love life better than you do. Yes, people often don't truly know what they want and what they respond to, but it's not like friends, family, or society at large are going to make better decisions for you. External influences go a long way in shaping what we think of as our values and preferences. If yours are making you happy, great. If you get frustrated and don't always know why, then you may want to look at whether you're living your own life or whether you're letting others live it for you. I've seen too many people talk themselves out of (or let themselves *get* talked out of) situations or experiences that they would have really enjoyed and found fulfilling. Not to mention people getting talked *into* situations, dates, or relationships that aren't actually suitable for them.

It's your life. No one cares more about your happiness than you do, and if you're going to make mistakes along the way, they may as well be your own. The next move is yours...

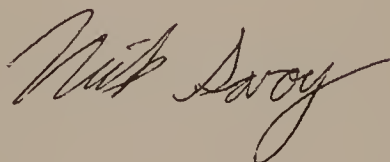
The Journey Continues . . .

One central component of Love Systems is “no one left behind.” After a bootcamp or live training, clients get lifetime access to a free private online community to share experiences, get expert advice, and keep up to date on new and powerful techniques.

I’d like you, as a reader of this book, to join me in something similar. On the website www.ItsYourMoveBook.com there is a private members’ area for women who have *It’s Your Move*. This area is full of exercises, case studies, additional material, cheat sheets, and so on to help you make the most of the powerful techniques in this book. I also pop in there as often as I can to answer questions about the material in the book or talk about users’ experiences.

Start your journey today—and I’ll see you on the other side!

Nick Savoy

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Nick Savoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nick" and last name "Savoy" clearly distinguishable.

About the Author

Nick Savoy has been a professional dating coach for men and women since 2004. He is currently president of Love Systems, the largest and most successful dating coaching organization worldwide, and is the author of *Magic Bullets*, a dating handbook for men. As an expert in the art and science of attraction, he has appeared on the *Dr. Phil* show, *ABC Nightline*, and *The Tyra Banks Show*, and was a consultant to the reality series *The Pickup Artist*.